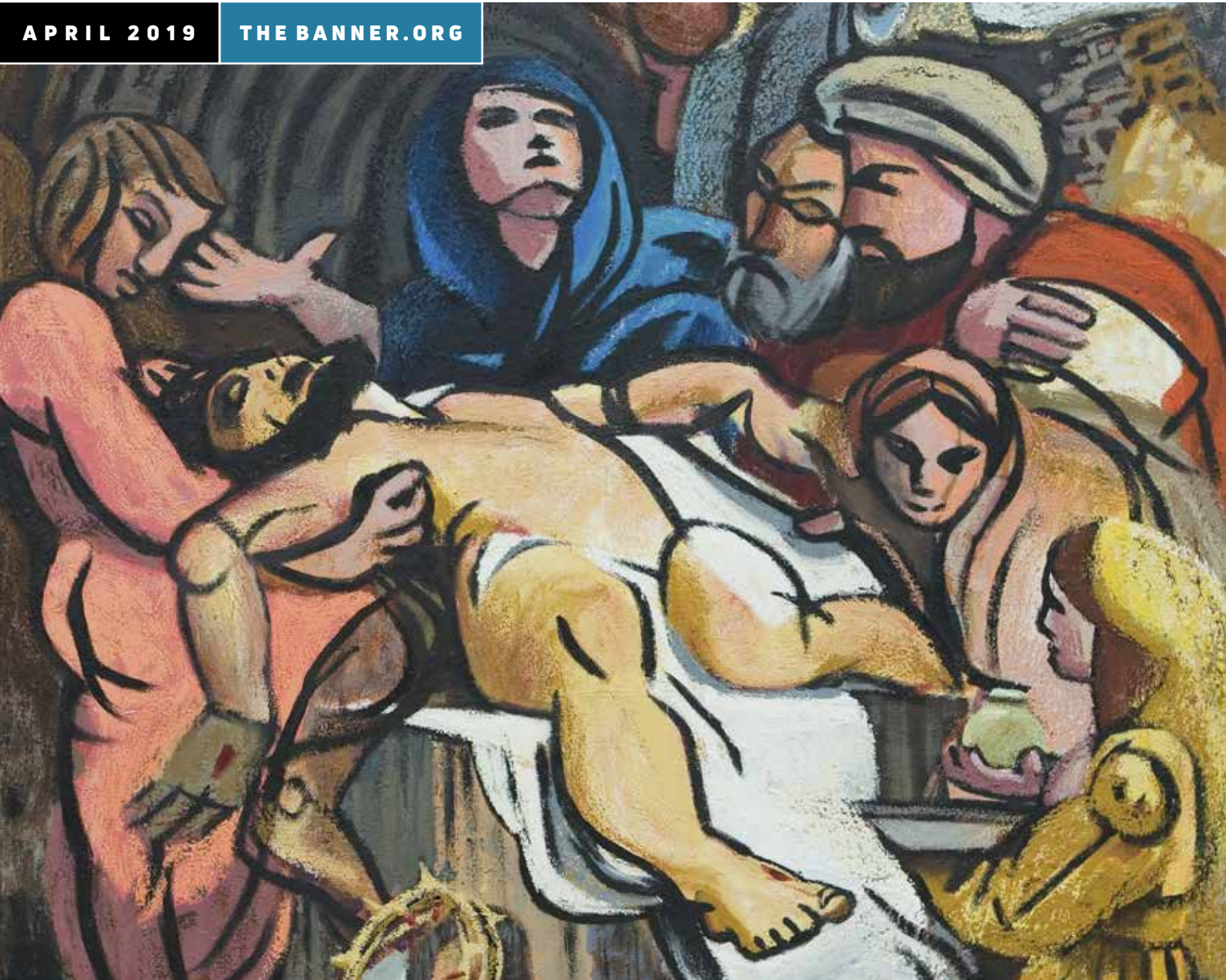


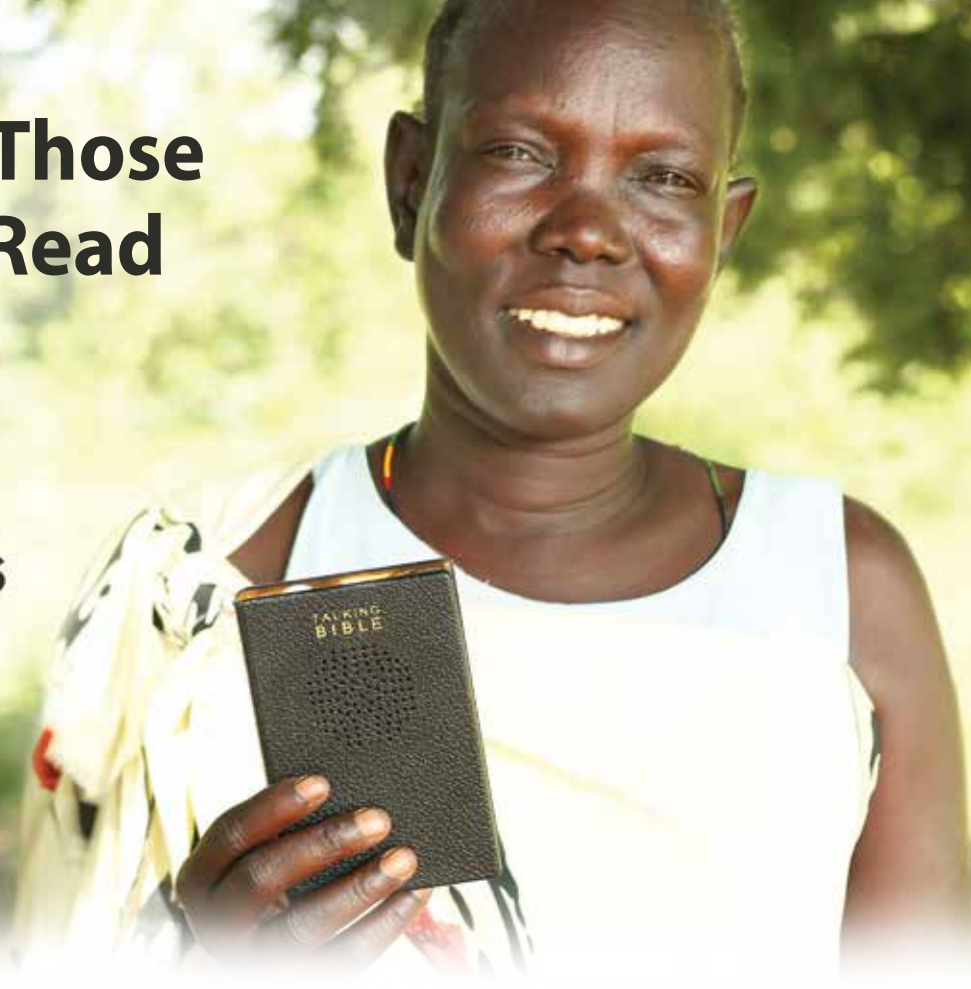
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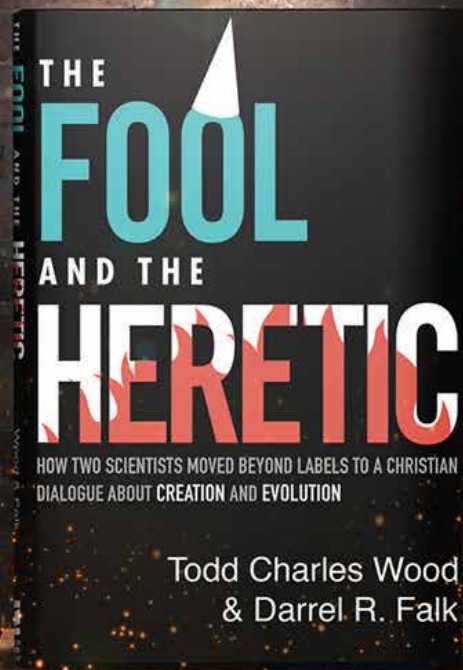
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- » Church Worldwide (News): The Science of Sabbath



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Life Beyond Limits

Christina Rea // In the resurrection of Christ we have come to understand that there is life on the other side of our human limitations.



The Elephant and the Grass

David A. Hoekema // What happened when diverse religious communities came together to bring peace in Uganda.



Faith Matters: The Power of the Holy Spirit

John Lee // The primary way to unlock the power of the Holy Spirit is through our believing actions.



Cover: "Life Beyond Limits," p. 10.
Illustration: Le Tombeau (after Titian)
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Abuse of Power

If we apply the same amount of energy that goes into our hypervigilance over certain sexual sins to preventing abuse of power in our circles, we would make huge strides.



Shiao Chong is editor-in-chief of *The Banner*. He attends Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Toronto, Ont.

Spanish and Korean translations of this editorial are available at TheBanner.org.

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AMERICA'S LARGEST Protestant denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, was recently rocked by reports of over 700 cases of sexual abuse by nearly 400 church leaders spanning 20 years. Worse, some denominational leaders knew of the problems but didn't stop the perpetrators. Indeed, many were repeat offenders who would leave one congregation only to prey on another. This is a horrific, sinful, and gross betrayal of God and God's people. And we, the Christian Reformed Church, are not immune to such evils.

When Synod 2018 debated Overture 2 last year, nearly every delegate raised a hand to indicate that they knew of someone who had experienced abuse. How many in our churches have suffered physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse? How many have suffered in silence and have still not reported? How many have left churches that failed to deal adequately with abuse?

Our denomination has an opportunity to better protect the vulnerable among us. As follow-up to Overture 2, a report on addressing the abuse of power in the CRCNA is coming to Synod 2019. It lists 10 recommendations, including requiring mandatory abuse prevention training for anyone entering the ministry, a code of conduct for all ministry staff, and better recordkeeping of cases. These steps are long overdue. If we wish to avoid the Southern Baptists' fate, we must implement these recommendations.

We have no good excuses not to do so. Pastors should welcome such training and a code of conduct. Pastors are to care for Christ's flock, and extra accountability measures will help to protect the flock. If our hearts and hands are clean, we have nothing to


fear from increased oversight and transparency.

We are talking not only about sexual abuse or physical abuse but also emotional abuse. Can we talk about spiritual bullying? Has bullying occurred in our churches? In our church council rooms? From the pulpit? In our online comment sections? And it's not just pastors who might abuse; they themselves can be bullied by elders or church members. Anyone can be abusive.

The synodical report also observes cultural factors that can foster abuse of power, such as too much deference to authority, too much loyalty to leaders, or an oversized concern for reputation. So one of its recommendations is to create a culture that prevents the abuse of power. This is an important recommendation, albeit difficult to achieve.

Difficult as it is, we still must try out of faithfulness to Christ's call to love one another as he has loved us. If ideas have consequences, then we need to trace abusive fruits to their cultural roots and weed them out. In their place, we need to promote ideas and practices that bear good fruits.

Yes, this requires a lot of work. But if we apply the same amount of energy that goes into our hypervigilance over certain sexual sins to preventing abuse of power in our circles, we would make huge strides. Otherwise, our spiritual hypocrisy will be exposed.

I pray that synod and our churches will do the right thing and implement steps to protect people who are vulnerable. Too much pain and suffering has already occurred. But I also trust in God's resurrection power to bring life and good out of pain and suffering. 

Have you received our annual appeal letter? Please consider a gift. Or give online at TheBanner.org/Donate. Thank you!

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REPLY ALL

Refinements for Synod

A recommendation I suggest is that synod commit to scheduling overtures and appeals on Mondays so that geographically distant synod attendees can attend without missing seven days of work (“Task Force Recommends Refinements for Annual Synods,” Feb. 2019). Currently distant attendees are required to sit in the gallery, waiting and wondering when and what day their item of concern will come to floor. This creates confusion about how best to buy a plane ticket that fits the need. At Synod 2018 I had to stay in Michigan longer than necessary because I couldn’t change my plane ticket. As advisory committees meet on Saturday, if overtures and appeals could be addressed on Monday, money and time would be saved and confusion reduced.

» Judy De Wit // Sioux Falls, S.D.

Putting a Face on Deportation

The Old Testament prophets are not calling us to support illegal activity (“When Deportation Gets Personal,” Feb. 2019). Upholding our laws does not mean we are afraid of anything or are any less compassionate, as the author implies. She does not speak for me. Supporting deportation of [people who enter the country illegally] is the only way to seek justice for all. You can promote mercy by helping immigrants with the costs and sponsorship through legal ports of entry, and continue to walk humbly with God, who calls us to obey those in authority while trusting in his compassionate care for all his children no matter what they face in their own countries.

» Sally Rishaw // Phoenix, Ariz.

Emily Brink has done a great service to readers in her article “When Deportation

Gets Personal.” Telling Yesica’s story will hopefully make a difference. True, this young mother, having escaped Guatemala with her two little boys, was living in this country illegally. Such situations often provoke outrage. But this article shifted the issue away from the rancor of political debate and shined a light on Scripture and our Christian faith.

» Ruth Tucker and John Worst // Grand Rapids, Mich.

We Are All Biased

Re: “We Are All Biased” (Feb. 2019): We are all biased. We have tendencies to pick on something to support our own biblical agenda. Our biblical Reformed hermeneutics (a daunting word) have never relied on a specific text to conform our beliefs with our contained word of God.

» George Lieuwen // Langley, B.C.

Beware the Yeast

Thanks for your work as editor! The article “Beware the Yeast of the Pharisees” (Feb. 2019) has been running through my mind continually. “That ought to humble us, make us reluctant to judge others, and make us examine our hearts and our motives” is such a great reminder and is something I need to put into practice daily.

» Jody Dooyema // Sioux Falls, S.D.

Atheism and Religion

As a former atheist myself, I have to say “Well done” and “You hit the mark” to Mike Wagenman (“Is Atheism a Religion?”, Feb. 2019). Many atheists assume their philosophical and theological beliefs are scientifically proven somehow. Instead they simply proclaim their faith and assumptions about what exists and what does not when they insist there is no God.

Every human being has a spiritual search engine that will always be seeking a god, and some end up finding the god of the Enlightenment. In the end, however, it was not clever arguments about how atheism is a religion that caused my heart to change. Only the love of God in Jesus Christ communicated through the inspired Word of God and lived out in a faithful, loving, and grace-filled community could do that.

» Ken Krause // Big Rapids, Mich.

Elmer Yazzie Art

Thanks for including the Native American art by Elmer Yazzie (“Art Teacher Participates in Dakota 38+2 Memorial Ride of Reconciliation,” Feb. 2019). It is interesting as art, and it also draws attention to atrocities done to Native Americans. *Banner* readers did not commit the atrocities but still benefit from what our country did. It is too easy and too comfortable for us to ignore this reality. Our collective guilt will stay with us until we recognize what we did and try to make amends. We are grateful for *The Banner* taking this small step in the process.

» Jake Terpstra // Grand Rapids, Mich.

Breathing Space

I was disappointed to read that River Terrace CRC in East Lansing is offering yoga classes (“‘Breathing Space’ Offers Yoga, Psalms,” Feb. 2019). I am not against exercise but would encourage the church to look into the origins of yoga. It comes from the Hindu religion. As we have more refugees from Hindu nations living in our country and turning to Christianity, I am afraid that they would be confused to see Christians doing a Hindu practice called yoga. Why not call these classes “stretching exercises that relieve stress” instead of yoga?

» Elisabeth Beels // Grand Rapids, Mich.

Faith...in Jesus

Affordable Housing

Re: "Ecumenical Grant Helps Toronto Churches Talk about Affordable Housing" (Feb. 2019): The city of Brockville, Ont., has an excellent example of developing senior nonprofit housing projects. The Marguerita Residence Corp. (MRC), a nonprofit housing corporation headed by a Baptist pastor, had built two senior buildings of over 120 units. By 2014 the Wall Street United Church had bought 14 houses in their downtown city block but did not have the expertise to develop the property. The MRC and the church joined together, and I offered my services as the volunteer development manager (I'm a member of Brockville CRC). The County joined the partnership by offering low-income subsidies for 30 of the 85 units. The church donated the land in return for having control of half the rental units for its members. The project value is \$14 million.

» Richard Van Veldhuizen //
Brockville, Ont.



As I Was Saying

Find the latest blog posts online at TheBanner.org:

- » Who Is My Neighbor?
- » Ugly Stories in the Bible
- » Comfort, Calling, and Crosses

IN OUR CULTURE it is quite fashionable to acknowledge a person's faith. We're likely to praise the strong faith that enables people to courageously cope with major challenges. This is true even in primarily secular settings.

Take an advice column like the "Dear Abby" column your parents or grandparents may have grown up on. Letters pour out all kinds of human woe and tribulation from those seeking wisdom. While dispensing the usual common-sense counsel, the columnist may affirm the faith that gives a person hope and courage and strength.


But faith in what or whom? That's quite another matter. Our culture shies away from any ultimate claims about a divine being. Many people share the belief that all religions lead to God. So it is acceptable for politicians and citizens to say, "God bless America." But it is not politically correct to say anything in particular about the God who is mentioned.

Why would an advice columnist make a point of affirming someone's faith? Because she or he isn't thinking of faith in the God of the Bible. Rather she recognizes that faith produces psychological benefits such as hope, courage, and fortitude. That's perceptive. These qualities do help a person cope with what Hamlet called the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." But such faith isn't centered on God; it's centered on the person. It's a humanistic faith.

For that reason, in today's cultural context it is important for God's people to make clear the source of our faith—the God in whom we put our trust. Our faith is not in ourselves, in that

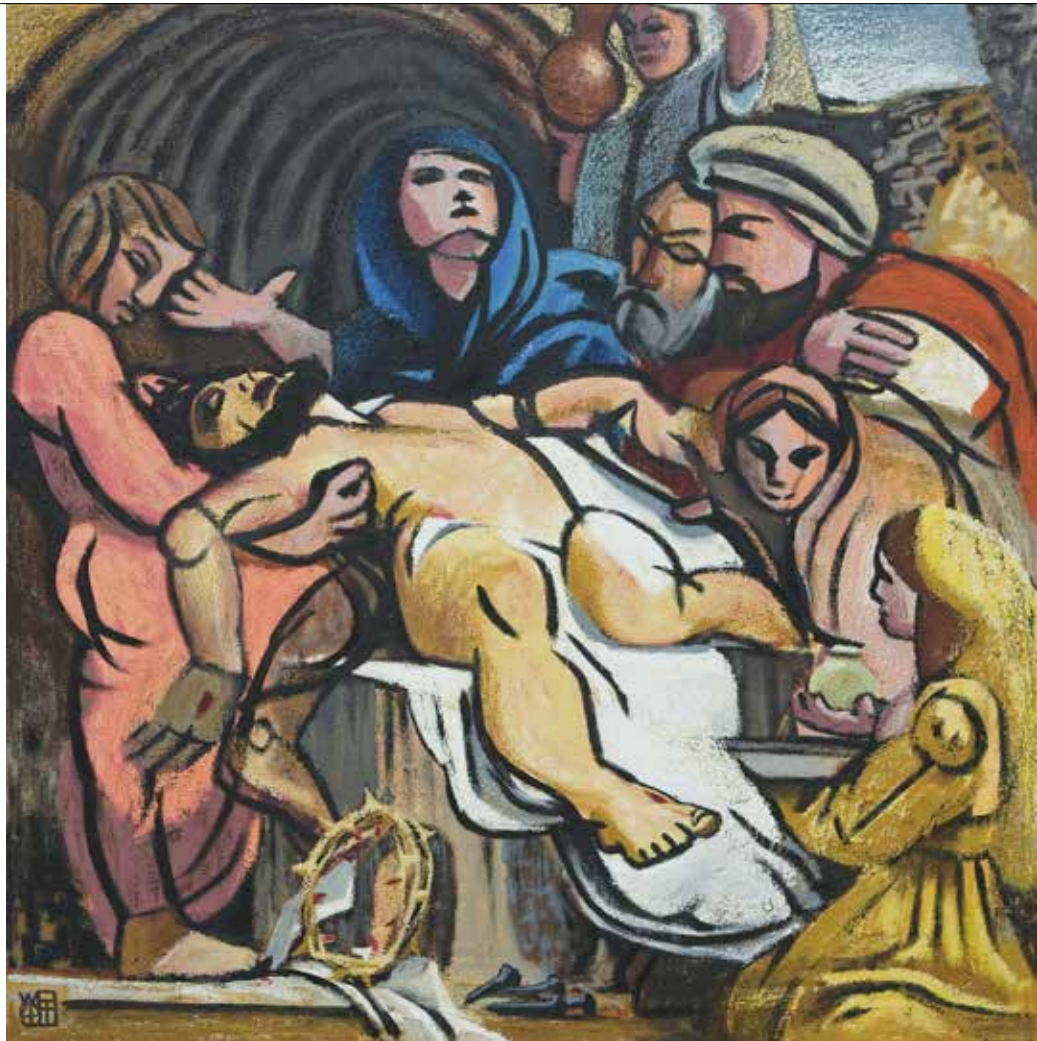
we carry a spark of the divine or that we have the capabilities to handle any challenge. Our faith is not in our nation, in the notion that it is specially chosen or exceptional. Our faith is not in just any version of a deity. No, our faith rests on Jesus Christ, the Savior and Lord of the world.

Recently I've noticed that even Christian writing sometimes refers to a person's faith without any reference to Jesus. I've noticed obituaries about faithful Christians that read along these lines: "She valued her faith and family first." But there's no mention of Jesus, the one on whom her faith rests. I've even noticed this in *Banner* articles.

Perhaps in Christian circles it is simply assumed that our faith rests in Jesus. But does it need to be said anyway? Yes! In a culture that often reduces faith to psychological strength, it is important to witness to the one in whom we trust. In Christian circles let's be clear and complete. Let's say more than "through these experiences his faith grew." Instead let's say that "his faith in Jesus Christ grew." Together let's lift up the name of Jesus. 



Neil Jasperse is a specialized transitional minister currently serving Faith Church in Nashville, Tenn.



Le Tombeau (after Titian) © 2019 Wayne Forte, EyeKons

Life Beyond Limits

Christina Rea

At one of the stores where I shop, there was a product display with the slogan “Life without limits.” The product was some brand of headphones; the idea was that the sound quality is so good that it gives consumers the power to hear beyond the usual human ability.

“Life without limits” seems to go a bit beyond what anyone should promise, even the manufacturers of really high-quality headphones. But we’d certainly like not to be hemmed in by our natural limitations, to have powers beyond the usual human ability. And sometimes, in some ways, we

actually can and do achieve that. As I write these words, for instance, I am on an airplane winging its way over the Atlantic Ocean. We humans don’t have wings, but we’ve managed to build winged machines that let us soar far above our natural limitations.

More than any other book of the Bible, the book of Job brings us quickly back down to the ground. Job 14 in particular is an honest and heartrending reflection on human limitations. One commentator named these verses “the courage of absolute vulnerability.” “A mortal, born of woman, few of days and full of trouble,” Job declares, “comes up like a flower and withers, flees like a shadow and does not

last” (Job 14:1-2). Job says these things toward the end of the first round of dialogue with his friends. He has endured unspeakable loss of family and fortune, and his friends have tried in various ways to explain and even justify his suffering. They have given not-so-helpful tips on how he might take control of his circumstances.

But Job knows better. At a fundamental level, control is the very thing he lacks. He simply does not have the power to go beyond the confines of mortality. He doesn’t plaster over the truth but faces it head-on: God has set certain limits for human beings that cannot be crossed. “Their days are determined, and the number of their

months is known to you, and you have appointed the bounds that they cannot pass" (Job 14:5, NRSV).

If there is any more to the story than this, Job is not able to see it. For a brief moment, he engages in a fanciful thought experiment. What if a corpse could come to life again? He would wait patiently in the underworld as long as it took for that to happen. But alas, as far ahead as he can see, that's just wishful thinking. "As waters fail from a lake, and a river wastes away and dries up, so mortals lie down and do not rise again" (Job 14:11, NRSV). As far ahead as he can see, even until the heavens are no more, death is final. So much for life without limits.

For their part and in their own way, the gospel Passion narratives are also concerned with human limits. In fact, they rub our noses in our limits. They are straightforward with us about Jesus' mortality. When Jesus' body is removed from the cross, it is a corpse, and it has just as much power and control as any other corpse does: none. The Roman government has custody of Jesus' body, and upon request, Pilate orders a transfer of custody to Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph takes the body, wraps it, and lays it in a tomb.

Jesus' body is passed to and fro. With no life left in it, with no power of its own, it is acted upon—in indifference or in love—by others. And then even more limits are imposed. Joseph rolls a large stone in front of the tomb, and if that weren't enough, guards arrive and seal the stone. The notion of life without limits was a mockery to Job; it was a mockery to Jesus sealed into the tomb, too.

We know the rest of the story, of course. We know the gospel writers

Jesus' body is
passed to and fro.
With no life left in
it, with no power
of its own, it is
acted upon—in
indifference or in
love—by others.

are only rubbing our noses in human limitations because they are setting us up to watch God blow those limitations out of the water. They are about to show us that yes, God did know the number of Jesus' days and months, and they were few and full of trouble. God knows the number of our days and months too, and has indeed set bounds that we, no matter how hard we try, cannot pass.

But the gospel writers also are about to show us that the God who set those natural limits took Jesus by the hand and drew him beyond those limits into an entirely new life. Like Job, as far as we have the power to see, there is nothing beyond those God-given limitations, even until the heavens are no more. But in the resurrection of Christ we come to understand that there is life on the other side of those limitations, beyond what we have the power to see from here. We live in the faith and in the hope that when our bodies have been closed up in the tomb, God

will take us by the hand too. God will draw us, like Jesus, to life beyond our natural limits.

During Easter Vigil, even as we live in the hope that Easter morning brings, we would do well to sit with the closed-up tomb for just a little while. We would do well to notice and to name, as Job and the gospel writers did, our natural human limitations. We would do well to stop long enough to let the full import of what happened here settle over us: that God freely and willingly took on the limitations of a mortal human being.

The Son of God lived within the same bounds that we all do, and he had a limited life span as we all do. Jesus fully embraced the limits that come with being human so that we might have the courage to do so too. You might call it the courage of absolute vulnerability. We need such courage because it is only through the absolute vulnerability of death that we can enter into an entirely new life. That's how it was for Jesus, and that's how it will be for us too. Knowing that, may we have the courage to embrace our limits until the day God takes us by the hand and leads us into the life that is beyond limits. **B**



Christina Rea is a resident in the clinical pastoral education program at St. Joseph Hospital in Mishawaka, Ind., and attends South Bend Christian Reformed Church.

1. How does the longing for "life without limits" resonate with you? Give an example, if you can.

[READ MORE](#) [ONLINE](#)

BIG QUESTIONS

Stewardship

I recently read about a movement called minimalism. It seems to encourage people to live with as few possessions as possible. Is minimalism compatible with being a Christian?

The minimalist movement is a rather loosely organized group of people committed to encouraging people to reflect on what they value and not to allow possessions to swallow up their lives. As such, there is nothing inherently unchristian about minimalism, and there are certainly significant parallels to Jesus' teaching on money and possessions.

Christians should reflect on what they own and be aware of the impact their lives have on the world around them. Those promoting minimalism frequently note the spiritual freedom associated with being less tied down by worldly goods.

The danger is that "minimizing" can become an end in itself and can impose its own iron bars of judgment that sap the joy and freedom of life.

I've sometimes thought of it this way: Imagine the world as a swimming pool into which you will jump. There are two extremes. You can do a cannonball and see how much water you can splash out of the pool, or, like an Olympic diver, you can make it your goal to disturb the water as little as possible.

That's a little like how we go through life. We can make a big splash,



Illustration for The Banner by Gisela Bohorquez

consume and own as much as we can, use up as many of the world's resources as we can, and leave a trail of damage in our wake. Or we can try to artfully slip through life leaving as little trace as possible. The world barely knows that we were there.

I don't know that either of these options are *the* "Christian" one. I'm quite sure the first one is not. But I'd also don't know that trying to slip through this world leaving the smallest possible mark is the way to go. That sounds more Buddhist than Christian. Instead, we are called to be responsible stewards, free from being possessed by any possession, owned by and owing to Christ alone.

Rolf Bouma is interim pastor at Dearborn Christian Fellowship, Dearborn, Mich., and teaches in the University of Michigan's Program in the Environment in Ann Arbor.

Bible/Church/Doctrine

What do you consider to be the most humorous passage in Scripture?

Thanks for asking! I'm always grateful for those who find humor important for our health and welfare, including biblical humor. There's a lot of it. But my favorite? I suppose one

obvious choice would be 1 Samuel 4:1-11. Israel goes out to fight against the Philistines, engages them in battle between Ebenezer and Aphek, and loses; about 4,000 soldiers die on the battlefield. Why? The elders finally figure it out: the army forgot to get the ark from Shiloh. God had not been with them. They correct their mistake, set out again, this time "bringing God." The Philistines enter the second battle in fear because Israel's God is now present. They've heard of God's mighty works. Yet they defeat Israel once more, kill far more thousands of soldiers, and even capture the ark (Israel's God)! Eli falls off his chair and dies (v. 18).

I understand that this is all very serious life-and-death stuff and not at all hilarious in that sense; yet I find humor just in the biblical recognition of human hubris—of "bringing God" so that God is on our side. I hear this in *christianmingle.com* ads: "Find God's match for you." As if God couldn't use *eharmony.com* to accomplish the same purpose; and as if there are no marriage troubles among Christians. I hear it among politically active evangelicals who truly believe God will grant Republicans what they espouse. Don't worry—I see it in Democrats

too. I hear it interwoven into our national pride—especially in the United States—where “God is surely on our side” in our dealings with other nations and terrorists. We fail only when we forget to bring God along. I remember it also from a host of classical and synodical gatherings, where God surely sees it “our” way and not “theirs.” We have the Bible on our side. And, yes, I see it in my own life too. It’s the echo of the tower of Babel (built to reach heaven) where God must stoop to see it. Hubris. Humor. Grace that saves.

Henry De Moor is professor emeritus of church polity at Calvin Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich. He’s the author of *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*.

Vocation

Should we know what choice God is calling us to make before we decide what path to take?

God calls us in remarkably diverse and unpredictable ways. Because this is so, there is no simple or generalizable formula for discerning what task, career, or domestic positions God is calling us to occupy. There is a mystery in God’s ways that thoughtful Christians wisely respect. Part of that mystery is how God makes us aware of our callings.

Sometimes we are aware of what God is calling us to do before we decide what path we will take. We may hope for this awareness when confronted with pivotal decisions about marriage, having children, or paid work. God sometimes gives us clear knowledge of our callings before we make pivotal decisions; if so we must heed that call. But often God does not give us clear direction on specific choices, even if God is clear that whatever we do, we do it in and for the Lord.

Sometimes awareness of God’s callings dawns not ahead of time but amidst the social spheres we already occupy. Perhaps we made key decisions with great uncertainty or even without

any awareness of God’s calling. But in hindsight it becomes evident that God has called us into the limits and possibilities of our stations in life. Here, trust in God’s callings becomes a lens through which we can see our lives as belonging, not to ourselves, but to our faithful savior, Jesus Christ.

Sometimes we cannot discern God’s callings until we are old and reflecting back on our lives. Here Kierkegaard’s words ring true: “Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.” Though we do not always see God’s hand before or while we live our lives, we sometimes can see God’s providential shaping of our lives as a whole after we have lived the bulk of our lives. This faith-shaped reflection on our life is a time of gratitude for the possibilities and limits God has given us for service, for both the triumphs and the failures God has used to shape us as members of Christ. For often “[v]ocation is more about autobiography than it is about making decisions about one’s future” (J. Barbour).

Douglas J. Schuurman is a professor of religion at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.

Digital Life

Mapping our family’s genealogy online started out as simple curiosity for my husband but now it’s all he talks and thinks about. Should I be concerned?

Some years back, *USA Today* claimed genealogy was the second most popular hobby in the United States. What was the first? Gardening. Whether or not this is still true, if you mention *genealogy* or *DNA testing* in a group, it’s likely someone has had some experience with it—or knows someone who has. You’re also likely to pick up on some friendly competitiveness about how far back their roots could be traced.

Free or inexpensive online tools like LDS’ *FamilySearch* (which I am using),

Ancestry.com, or *FindMyPast* make the process easy and fun—fun like a scavenger hunt where other people’s input gets merged with your own in sometimes dramatic ways: your family tree growing in front of your eyes as the system makes connections you’ve not yet made.

Like most technologies—and especially ones shuffling your private information around—it’s worth looking into the privacy policies of the companies offering these services, but from what I could tell, it’s as safe as anything online these days. For example, only information about deceased relatives is open to the public.

The hunt itself can be fun. But far more interesting are the stories told or written that accompany the gathering of birth, marriage, and death dates. Kind of like the first chapter of Matthew: the story that starts about mid-way is much more interesting than the “begats”—the genealogy proceeding it.

So should you be concerned about your husband’s hobby? Probably not—you may even find yourself getting caught up in the excitement of the stories he uncovers!

Note: Calvin College and Seminary Archives (calvin.edu/hh) is a great resource if your ancestors attended or belonged to a Christian Reformed Church. They too have contributed to the online service’s databases by making membership lists and whatnot available.

Dean Heetderks is co-director of the CRCNA’s Ministry Support Services and art director of *The Banner*. Have a question or comment? Write him at dean.heetderks@gmail.com.



Got a Big Question for any of our panelists? Email it to editorial@thebanner.org with “Big Questions” in the subject line.

California Church Stages Stations of the Cross for Good Friday

NEWS

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For the past two years, Community Christian Reformed Church in Oakdale, Calif., has conducted a creative commemoration of Good Friday. The church plans to present “Stations of the Cross,” an artistic and meditative journey of the crucifixion, again this year.

Visitors are welcomed to walk through a 12-station visual display with accompanying printed Scripture texts. There is no organized worship service or even speaking between guests. A light soundtrack plays to set the tone. Vivian Crow, staff member and participant at Community CRC, said that this structure “makes for a very personal experience between God and the visitor.”

The stations are open for a few hours in the afternoon, allowing individuals 15 to 20 minutes to walk through. Communion

is also available once visitors have reached the end of the tour.

Margie Anderson, a member of Community CRC, has organized Stations of the Cross each year. Anderson has found or designed the artwork for each station. Other church volunteers, including the elders and deacons, have helped execute the unique service.

Stations of the Cross is open to the community. About 30 guests attended in the first two years.

— Elizabeth Drummond

Midnight Breakfasts Kick Off Finals Week

River Terrace Christian Reformed Church in Lansing, Mich., has become known for its Midnight Breakfast held at the start of final exams for nearby Michigan State University. Located just west of campus, the church has opened its doors for students the Monday of finals week each term since May 2015.

April 29, 2019, will be the ninth middle-of-the-night breakfast. The church offers the event during Christmas exams too. From 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. the next day, students study in quiet rooms in the church’s lower level or play volleyball or basketball upstairs in the gym. At about 10 p.m., students gather for the meal in the fellowship hall. Ken Bieber, pastor of outreach and discipleship at River Terrace, offers prayers before the meal, including a blessing for the graduating seniors.



Photo by Dave Ruark

MSU students take a break from studies to enjoy a late-night breakfast at River Terrace CRC.

Bieber said the goal for the midnight breakfasts is “for Christian and non-Christian students to experience the love of Christ through the hospitality of

the church.” Cheerful church volunteers in green aprons serve students piles of pancakes and bacon, mounds of scrambled eggs, and pans of cinnamon rolls.

The idea came out of a shared experience that Bieber and Dave Ruark, a member of River Terrace, had in their own undergraduate days in Kalamazoo, Mich., when an area church had hosted a similar event.

Bieber said the April 2018 event had the largest group of students yet, including many first-time attendees. “It’s a good place to study and there’s food. That’s how you woo college students anywhere,” said 2018 MSU graduate Katelyn Gutwein, who attends River Terrace when in Lansing. Gutwein attended seven Midnight Breakfasts. “I think it is a great outreach opportunity,” she said.

— Susan Vanden Berg



Photo by Pat ApPaul Photography

Churches Serve as Emergency Food Distribution Sites

Grand Rapids, Mich., experienced a greater than usual number of weather-related school closures this winter. When schools close, so do onsite programs that provide food for students in difficult circumstances. In February, Seymour Christian Reformed Church partnered with a local food pantry to make sure low-income kids had access to meals.

Seymour opened up its doors for two days to serve as an emergency distribution site for Kids' Food Basket. The nonprofit provided food including fruit and vegetables, meat sticks, and cereal.

Seymour's involvement arose out of a conversation between Amy VanderPloeg, a member of the congregation for the past 16 years, and her neighbor Afton DeVos, chief operating officer for Kids' Food Basket.

"They just needed space and a willing and welcoming area. It was an awesome thing that we were able to do that as a church," VanderPloeg said. DeVos had mentioned that the families typically served by the Food Basket "hadn't had school-provided food in nearly a week."

About 15 families were provided for during the two days. "We could tell it meant a lot to them," VanderPloeg said.

Bethany CRC hosted a Feeding America food truck on Feb. 27.

In Muskegon, Mich., Bethany CRC also served as an emergency food distribution site in late February.

Cindy Kendall, a member of the church's community ministries team, anticipated an increased need for the church's neighbors because of school weather closures and other factors. Kendall said nearly 70 percent of the children in the core of the city live at or below the poverty level. On February 27, 152 individuals and families came to the church to receive boxes filled with meat, cheeses, and fresh produce from a Feeding America truck. Kendall said the team also delivered 47 food boxes to families who had no transportation.

Randy Vander Weit, director of youth and discipleship at Bethany, said the church isn't typically in favor of the Band-Aid approach of food trucks, but the "winter vortex" and mistimed SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits caused by the partial government shutdown in January prompted action. "It seemed like a wonderful way to help our neighbors in need," he said.

—Greg Chandler

Noteworthy



Ronald Kuipers, named **president of the Institute for Christian Studies** in January 2018, describes the past year at the interdisciplinary graduate school in Toronto, Ont., as "daunting, challenging, but also very rewarding." His first year as president included a **move to a new location** in the heart of University of Toronto, **implementation of a new strategic plan** to build financial stability, and a **deepening partnership with The King's University** in Edmonton, Alta.

Ontario (Calif.) Christian High School took the **2018 state title** in the California Interscholastic Federation's Division III **Girls' Volleyball Championship**. The winning game was against Presentation High School of San Jose, Calif., in November.



Joe Kamphuis, pastor of Chelwood Christian Reformed Church in Albuquerque, N.M., and **chaplain with the New Mexico Air National Guard**, will be deployed to Kuwait this July. In 2017, Classis Red Mesa, the regional group of churches to which Chelwood CRC belongs, gave permission for Kamphuis to work full time as a chaplain while ministering as a pastor.

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IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Jon Christian
(Chris) Schroeder*

1944-2019

"He was a pastor's pastor," said Dave Beelen, pastor of Madison Square Church, where Chris Schroeder was a member. "His gentle way and easy transparency invited pastors in need to share with him." Schroeder, 74, died on January 19, six years after a diagnosis of Parkinson's disease.

Schroeder's first career was as an engineer with the C.I.A. at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. There he gave his life to Jesus Christ and decided to study at Gordon-Conwell Seminary. After pastoring United Methodist congregations in Alden, Mich., and Sunfield, Mich., Schroeder went to Eastern Europe in 1992 as a missionary. He loved teaching and discipling and the adventure of being undercover again in these communist regions.

Returning to Grand Rapids, Mich., in 2003, Schroeder eventually found fulfillment using his pastoral gifts at Madison Square Church and was ordained in the CRC in 2006. He and his wife led retreats for hurting pastors and spouses with PastorCare and Shepherd's Heart Ministries.

Schroeder thanked God every day for God's goodness and faithfulness. He moved into assisted living in May 2018. He will be lovingly remembered by Carolyn, his wife of 51 years, and by four children and eight grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Michigan Church's Friendship Service Welcomes All



At Plymouth Heights Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., a Standard Poodle named Walter is a staple in the Friendship Ministries program. Walter is also an annual guest during the congregation's yearly worship service led by the group.

Friendship Ministries is a faith formation and inclusion ministry that brings together church mentors and people with intellectual disabilities.

Tom VanWingerden, a Plymouth Heights member, is executive director of Friendship Ministries. He described the yearly worship service: "Other than the sermon, we're up there reading and singing and leading the songs," Van Wingerden said. "It's the one day during the year when [Friendship participants] are in charge of almost every aspect of worship."

Walter makes himself at home in the sanctuary during the service. "He goes up and down the aisles [and] sits on the pews. It's quite fun to see a dog as part of our group," Van Wingerden said.

Walter became involved in Friendship Ministries about 10 years ago when Ron Mekkes, a program mentor and Plymouth Heights member, started bringing him to

Walter, a Standard Poodle, is frequently welcomed to Plymouth Heights CRC Friendship group.

the group's Tuesday gatherings in hopes of getting some participants to open up. Van Wingerden says Walter's gentle nature made him an immediate hit.

"He'd go up and down the aisles, and people would pet him," he said. "He's very patient. He's a therapy dog for almost everyone that comes to the group."

Friendship Ministries is a nondenominational organization that got its start in the early 1980s with participating churches in both the U.S. and Canada. It seeks to "promote the ideals of equality, interdependence, compassion, and hospitality within the body of Christ," according to the organization's website.

Plymouth Heights has been part of Friendship Ministries for about 25 years, holding weekly meetings from September through May. About 25 people attend the Tuesday gatherings at Plymouth Heights, Van Wingerden said. The 2019 Friendship service is to be held April 28.

— Greg Chandler

MOPS of Battle Creek Integrates all Ages

Marge Kool, an 86-year-old grandmother, didn't expect to be involved in MOPS—Mothers of Preschoolers—at her age. The mother of six and grandmother of 19 says she's more like a MOPS great-grandma than a "MOPS mom," the term generally used for mothers who attend MOPS groups.

Her church, a joint Christain Reformed and Reformed Church in America congregation called Covenant Hope in Battle Creek, Mich., opened a local charter with MOPS International in September 2018 to minister to young families living in the area. Kool was flattered when her pastor and his wife, Joel and Kelsey Klingenberg, and her granddaughter Amy Asma approached her about becoming a mentor mom for the group. Klingenberg and Asma, coordinators for the group and moms of young children themselves, value mothers supporting each other. "MOPS groups allow moms to learn more about the Lord and reflect on his



Marge Kool helps two preschoolers pick apples at a MOPS playdate.

work in their lives. It also provides a safe space to share experiences, build friendships, and feel encouraged in this phase of life," said Asma.

Thanks to Covenant Hope's experienced volunteer moms and grandmas, the MOPS group has six mentor moms. Kool said that aspects of parenting today, including social media, add complexity she did not experience while

raising her own family without a mentor. "I try not to tell them what to do. I guide," Kool explained.

Mentor moms lead the devotional time during meetings (held first and third Fridays), participate in activities, attend play dates when able, and pray for the moms on a regular basis. "The 17 MOPS moms have greatly benefited from the love and time invested in them from the mentor moms," Kelsey Klingenberg said.

— Eliza Anderson

New York Church Equips School

More than 700 items are knitted at home each year by members of Rochester (N.Y.) Christian Reformed Church's knitting ministry. Some of those creations go to community centers and health clinics, but many of them warm the heads and hands of students at John James Audubon School #33, the church's neighborhood public school. It's the largest in the district with 1,200 students who experience a high poverty rate. Concerned church members began a school relations program two years ago. As many as 13 volunteers provide a Christian presence at the school daily.

Nancy Johnson, a retired teacher and Rochester CRC member who helped establish the volunteer program with a gym teacher at the school, said there has been great support from the congregation.

The congregation has established relationships with staff by donating holiday candy to be enjoyed on hectic days and sharing notes of encouragement with staff members in addition to providing school supplies and handmade knitted items for students.

At the beginning of the 2018-2019 academic year, Rochester CRC invited school administrators to a worship service to report on how the collaborative effort has made a difference at the school. Administrators expressed thanks for the congregation's prayers, encouragement, time, and resources.

— Eliza Anderson

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Herman Leestma

1925-2019

Born and educated in Michigan, Herman Leestma served the U.S. Navy during World War II. He graduated from Calvin Seminary in 1952 and was ordained that same year. Over the next 40 years, he pastored several Christian Reformed congregations. Leestma passed away on January 17 at age 93.

His first call was to Morrison (Ill.) CRC, followed by Immanuel CRC in Muskegon, Mich.; Lakewood CRC in Long Beach, Calif.; and New Hope CRC in Spokane, Wash. From 1987 until his retirement in 1991 he pastored Enumclaw (Wash.) CRC.

In his younger years Leestma enjoyed hiking and camping. He once hiked to the top of Mount Whitney, the tallest mountain in the "lower 48." Later, he enjoyed camping with his family at Steamboat Rock, Wash.

After retirement from active ministry, the Leestmas settled in Spokane Valley, where they attended First Presbyterian Church. They could be found most Saturdays having dinner at Arby's.

Leestma will be fondly remembered for his hat, cane, and love of ice cream. He is survived by his seven children and their spouses, 11 grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren. He was predeceased in 2012 by Melba, his wife of 62 years.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Council Discusses Indigenous Ministries

The Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church conducts the business of the church between meetings of synod, the annual leadership meeting of the CRC. It handles administrative matters and completes tasks assigned to it by synod. It is comprised of 48 delegates, one from each classis (regional group of churches), plus four at-large delegates. Following are reports of some of the decisions and actions of the Council at its February 2019 meeting in Grand Rapids, Mich. The next meeting will be in May 2019 in Grimsby, Ont.



The newly adopted logo of the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee.

Discussion of Indigenous ministries in the U.S. and Canada came up in several conversations and reports at the recent Council of Delegates meeting.

Indigenous Ministry in the U.S.

Delegate Stanley Jim of Classis Red Mesa wondered if there is an overall CRC vision for Native American ministries: "The Anishinaabe live right in your backyard here in Grand Rapids. Is there a plan in place to intentionally reach out to Native American communities?"

Zachary King, director of the CRC's foreign and domestic missions agency, Resonate Global Mission, said that Resonate carries a piece of that work in the U.S., but ministry is not separated by ethnic group. "We have some missions staff dedicated to working with Native American groups."

Delegates also heard that work is ongoing for Back to God Ministries International, the CRC's media outreach ministry, to produce broadcast media in the Navajo language.

Indigenous Ministry in Canada

CRC Indigenous ministry is much more robust in Canada, with three aboriginal ministries established in the 1970s that are coordinated by the CRC's Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee. The ministries are located in Edmonton, Alta., Winnipeg, Man., and Regina, Sask.

That committee received approval to change its name to the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee, noting that the change reflects the more recognized terminology used in broader Canadian society.

It also adopted a new logo. Members of the committee noted Indigenous characteristics and features in the circular shape, feathers of different birds, and medicine wheel colors. "We see this logo

as a display of how we see ourselves within the journey of reconciliation as well as advocates for justice within Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities alike," the committee wrote. "With the circle, we recognize wholeness and completeness with each person being equal and important on this journey. . . . Additionally, we realize the many, many teachings that come from the medicine wheel from Indigenous cultures and communities, from learning about the seasons of life, human health and healing, the cycle of the Earth, and much more."

The committee logo would not be used on its own but rather always with the official CRC logo. "In this way, the CRC logo remains in its truest form so congregations and communities realize the larger CRC church is involved in the area of Indigenous justice and reconciliation," the committee noted.

No Binational Approach

The Council also heard that each nation's approach to Indigenous ministry should be processed separately. The denomination's leadership staff noted, "We realize the limitations of this idea and its potential pitfalls, but cannot find a way to conduct the entire conversation together. It is our hope that perhaps a shared-learning gathering may be appropriate at the end of each nation's dialogue."

To that end, the Council decided to proceed with a nationally contextualized approach, noting that it should leave room for comments, questions, and considerations from people on the other side of the U.S.-Canada border. It also stated that a better understanding of syncretism should be a key result of this process.

Red Mesa's Stanley Jim appreciated the noting of syncretism. "That's what we're dealing with," he said. "We need a really good definition of syncretism."

—Gayla R. Postma

Centre for Public Dialogue Work Plan Approved

The Centre for Public Dialogue (CPD) had its 2019 work plan approved at the recent meeting of the Council of Delegates. The Centre is a Canadian ministry of the Christian Reformed Church that focuses on dialogue with the Canadian government and empowering citizens on a range of social justice issues.

Indigenous education reform remains, as it has for the last number of years, at the top of the Centre's work. Director

"The church is unique in that it is one of the remaining groups in society that gathers a diverse group of people around shared commitments."

—Mike Hogeterp,
director, Centre for
Public Dialogue

Mike Hogeterp said they plan to do careful analysis and advocacy on this issue in advance of the federal election in October.

Work also continues on refugee settlement and integration in partnership with World Renew, Citizens for Public Justice, and the Mennonite Central Committee. The Centre's report noted that controversies over irregular border crossings into Canada continue to influence negative public opinion with respect to refugees in general. The Centre plans to collaborate

with its partners to encourage positive public narratives about refugees.

The Centre moved creation care and climate justice to its main project list, eliminating a designation for "second tier" projects. CPD dropped its work regarding commercial sexual exploitation (human trafficking) due to lack of capacity.

Biblical and Theological Foundations

A new task added to the CPD is a focus on biblical and theological foundations. Hogeterp told *The Banner* that this is matter of course in all of the work they do. "However," he said, "with the evolving context of deepening polarization, we've elected to dedicate some focused time to it in the coming year."

Speaking to Canadian delegates, Hogeterp noted that the changing political context, how media shape political understanding and creates echo chambers for many, is weakening the understanding of a shared sense of citizenship. "The church is unique in that it is one of the remaining groups in society that gathers a diverse group of people around shared commitments," he said. "As such it has an opportunity to demonstrate civility and unity in diversity in the manner of salt and light."

—Gayla R. Postma

Appointments to OSJ Committee Delayed

Appointments to a committee intended to support and guide the Christian Reformed Church's Office of Social Justice have been delayed. The CRC's Council of Delegates couldn't approve names of those to be appointed because classis stated clerks had been overlooked in the nominating process.

Synod 2018 instructed the Council to establish the committee after debating the role of OSJ and whether it was venturing beyond its mandate of Christian advocacy to actual lobbying by calling on church members to support specific legislation. (See "Synod 2018 Creates New Justice Committee," July/Aug. 2018, p. 18.)

The Council approved the composition of the committee October 2018. (See "Committee to Guide Office of Social Justice Planned," Dec. 2018, p. 16.) Nominations were to be sought by several avenues, including soliciting names from U.S. stated clerks, the people who coordinate the work of regional groups of churches. At its February meeting, the Council encouraged a communication to U.S. stated clerks to now provide nominations.

—Gayla R. Postma

Canadian Denominational Employees Get Pay Scale Bump

The Council of Delegates decided to raise the salary scale of Canadian denominational employees by 1.5 percent.

The issue of pay for Canadian employees was first raised at the Council's October 2018 meeting, when there was a spirited discussion about why employees north of the border are paid differently than their American counterparts, especially considering that the cost of living near Burlington, Ont. (the Canadian CRC's main office), is so much higher than Grand Rapids, Mich., (the U.S. main office). (See "Are Canadian CRC Employees Paid Enough?" at *thebanner.org*, Oct. 19, 2018.)

At that time, the Council voted not to change the Canadian scale, though some Canadians registered negative votes.

However, following that meeting, the executive committee took up the matter again. After digging deeper into the data, it recommended raising the target salary levels for the Canadian pay system by 1.5 percent. The Council agreed.

Delegate Chris DeWinter, ClassisNiagara, thanked the executive committee for taking up the discussion again and wondered if the 1.5 percent increase is equitable. Terry Veldboom, CRCNA controller in Canada, said it is definitely a step forward, noting that the two separate pay scales are based on very different situations. "It will help alleviate some difference between the two. It's really how it relates to local salaries."

—Gayla R. Postma

Bible Translation Standing Committee Proposed



Photo by James Coleman / Unsplash

If Synod 2019 agrees, the Council of Delegates will establish a standing committee to review Bible translations for potential use in the Christian Reformed Church. This fulfills one of the tasks given to the Council by Synod 2018.

The Council is recommending that a standing committee meet at least once a year, normally by video conference. That committee will establish the criteria or rubric by which to evaluate the translation philosophy and process used by translators.

It will then apply that criteria to any new Bible translation requested by churches or synod. An ad hoc group prepared a report recommending how a translation committee should operate. It noted that it is important to know for what purpose the translation will be used. "If the translation will be used for exhortation from the pulpit a different standard will need to be exercised than if the translation were to be used for Bible study or for personal devotion time."

The committee will report to the Council its translation recommendations for use in the pulpit, Bible study, and personal devotions. Synod will be informed of the recommendations.

The Council is recommending that the translation committee be comprised of three members of the theological faculty, ordinarily from Calvin Theological Seminary; an English-language professor or communications professional who understands the current use of language in contemporary life; and a pastor who understands the needs of the public.

Appointments to the committee will be approved by synod.

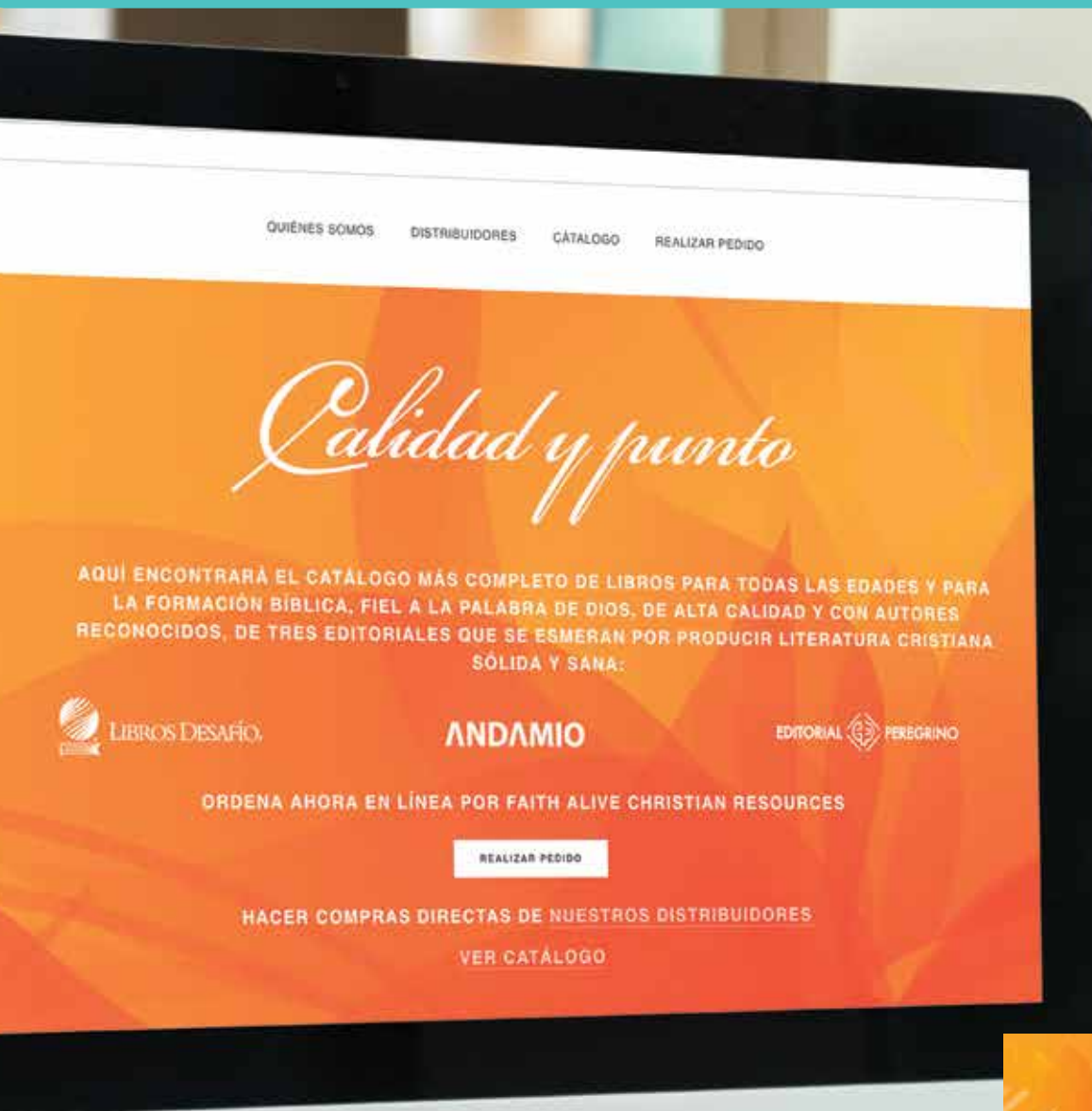
The Church Order, which governs worship in the denomination, requires that synod assess Bible translations for use in public worship, but a committee has not existed for some years. In 2006, synod directed the Board of Trustees (the predecessor of the Council) to establish a translation committee but the Board declined to do that. Instead, it voted to appoint such a committee if and when synod adopts overtures requesting a review of specific translations, citing little demand for such reviews and unjustified cost for an ongoing committee.

—Gayla R. Postma

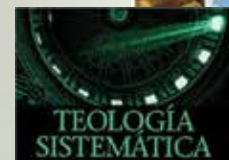
Other Actions by the Council of Delegates:

- » Received reports from the executive director, the director of ministries and administration, and the Canadian ministries director about their work.
- » Heard that Back to God Ministries International has appointed Huascar de la Cruz as its Spanish-language ministry director and is considering where to locate that ministry.
- » Modified the Articles of Incorporation of Calvin College to approve the name change to Calvin University. (Change expected May 2020.)
- » Approved an edited version of the "Reimagining Ministry Shares" report and recommended it to Synod 2019. (See "Reimagining Ministry Shares," Dec. 2018, p. 18.)
- » Reviewed a draft of the Abuse of Power Committee's report mandated by Synod 2018. The final draft will be reviewed by the Council in May 2019.
- » Endorsed ministry evaluation reports for Faith Formation Ministries, Worship Ministries, and Calvin College that will be submitted to Synod 2019.
- » Endorsed the direction of the Reformed Partnership for Congregational Renewal (RPCR) as a joint endeavor between the CRCNA and the RCA in promoting renewal for all churches.

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**Set Free from
Poverty of the Mind:
The Riches of
Our Identity in Christ**

By Sara DeBoer, World Renew

Last November, Alberto Sairessi had a life-changing experience. At 51 years old, the father of six in Mozambique was asked *his* opinion. Sairessi was part of a community visioning and planning session offered by World Renew and its local partner in Mozambique.

"I didn't know how to make community plans," said Sairessi. "Many have visited us in the past, and I always waited for them to come up with a vision and plans. I thought people from the outside would have better vision and plans for us."

But this session was different. After going through a visioning process, community members were able to create their own plan based on their own priorities: a proper school for their children and a community trust fund to help their most vulnerable people. Sairessi was delighted. A process he had thought impossible was not.

"Personally," he said, "this experience was a learning opportunity, and I hope to share it with other communities while continuing to motivate my own community. I feel transformed!"

Sairessi hadn't previously engaged in improving his community because he didn't believe he could. But with encouragement from World Renew, his beliefs about himself had been upended, and he was energized and hopeful. He had a vision and was ready to share it with others.

World Renew has a vision too: a world where people experience and extend Christ's compassion and live together in hope as God's community. They claim God's deep passion for justice and mercy as their motivation.

"As God's imagebearers, we don't just observe God's justice and mercy. We inhabit it," explained Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, Canadian director for World Renew. "We own it because we belong to God. Justice and mercy are as much a part of our identity as being God's beloved."

Kaastra-Mutoigo supported this idea by pointing to verses such as Ephesians 2:8-10: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves; it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

A visioning process helped Alberto Sairessi recognize his own capacity to improve his life and his community.

The contemporary testimony of the Christian Reformed Church, *Our World Belongs to God*, reaffirms this identity as God's creation and beloved children, Kaastra-Mutoigo said. It tells us we are "made in God's image . . . [and] appointed earthkeepers and caretakers." It goes on to claim our identity as God's covenant partners: "Set free for joyful obedience, we offer our hearts and lives to do God's work in the world. With tempered impatience, eager to see injustice ended, we expect the Day of the Lord."

"Our identity in Christ is much on the minds of World Renew as we seek to renew hope, restore creation, and reconcile lives around the world," said Kaastra-Mutoigo. "Our staff sees that poverty of the mind can separate God's children from their belovedness as much as poverty of the body. Warped worldviews like 'I deserve what I have because I have worked hard for it' or 'I was fated to be poor' distort our true identity in Christ and thwart the Spirit's fruit of justice and mercy. Changing these mindsets is essential if one wants to find long-term, sustainable solutions to disaster and poverty."

Compelled by God's longing for justice for all of his children, World Renew asks people to consider how often their own actions perpetuate a certain story and how they can better help people see the truth about the world and themselves.

"In pursuing community development, responding to disaster, and advocating for peace and justice," Kaastra-Mutoigo said, "we want people to know the truth of their identity in Christ as beloved children of his father."

Youth Impact Clubs

With one of the highest murder rates in the world and over 60 percent of the population in poverty, Honduras is a challenging place to live. Children there can easily feel worthless and hopeless—vastly estranged from their belovedness in Christ.

For over a decade, World Renew Impact Clubs have offered love, structure, and opportunity to hundreds of children in clubs across the capital of Tegucigalpa.

"There is a generation of youth here growing up in a violent context, and we need to act now to prevent that from changing who they become," said World Renew Latin American ministry team leader Leanne Talen Geisterfer.

Marylena Sánchez despaired for her teenaged son, Everth, and even considered taking him out of school. In a cycle of



Overcoming social norms and deep-seated beliefs about gender roles helped Catharine Anaso and David Alele repair their marriage and improve life for their family.

anger and rebellion after being bullied at school, Everth felt hopeless and worthless. He daily acted the part.

But Impact Club knew God's truth about Everth and persisted in counseling and supporting him. Club activities helped Everth slowly change his school performance, and encouragement from the group allowed him to gradually own his value as a child of God. He has become an eager Club member, and his mother rejoices.

Stepping Stones

In Uganda, Catherine Anaso and David Alele's relationship was fractured, tense, and even abusive. Social norms and deep-seated beliefs about men and women and their roles and relationships were draining their marriage of joy and undermining their identities as imagebearers of God.

Like any couple, they wanted for their marriage what Christ wants for all of us: "to lead a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3).

When these parents of three young children embarked on Stepping Stones training with World Renew, they had to confront the poverty of their own minds that was fostering their unhappy relationship. Eighteen weeks of personal reflection led to big changes in their marriage. "There are so many changes," laughed Anaso. "Should I mention them all?"

As part of the Stepping Stones training, Anaso confronted her own belief that only men can earn money. She joined the Oriam Can village savings and loan association, started buying and smoking fish, and began contributing to the household income. Alele confronted his own beliefs about a man's role in the family and began helping with household chores.

Together they decided to use their new income to pay school fees for their children, affirming their decision that children should not be sources of labor but cared for and educated. With renewed respect for themselves and for each other as children of God, the couple now enjoy trust and faithfulness, allowing them to make plans together, share confidences, and welcome others into their home.

Land Security


Sometimes God's thirst for justice brings World Renew into the realm of law and the justice of human courts. In many countries around the world, for example, climate challenges and population growth make land an increasingly precious resource. People who are poor and vulnerable find themselves exploited and abused.

Following the call of *Our World Belongs to God*, World Renew vows to "call on all governments to do public justice and to protect the rights and freedoms of individuals, groups, and institutions so that each may do their tasks."

For the last decade, World Renew Laos has worked to improve land security for vulnerable people groups in the mountain districts of Phongsaly and Xiangkhouang. With promises of better access to education in the lowlands, those in power have been trying to move these ethnic people groups to the valley in order to claim the mountain land for commercial plantations.

World Renew has answered these attempts by building schools in the mountain villages and helping tribal farmers adopt sustainable farming practices that in turn help them outpace large commercial enterprises. In the past year, land-use mapping helped farmers to rotate their fields more productively and might support the farmers' case to the government. The people of Phongsaly and Xiangkhouang are leaning into their identities as equally cherished children of God and caretakers of the earth.

World Renew sees itself as a covenant partner with God in the renewal of creation and the restoration of his children's true identities.

"It's our privilege at World Renew," Kaastra-Mutoigo said, "to bring the good, biblical news of God's kingdom justice, God's kingdom abundance, and God's forgiveness in Christ to all." 

Reformed Identity and Worship

“IS THERE ANYTHING in our worship that we have in common?” Some variation of that question has been asked multiple times during meetings of the Christian Reformed Church’s Worship Ministries advisory committee. Indeed, you might not guess that the Korean pastor, the African-American worship leader who embodies a Pentecostal fervor, the newly commissioned pastor of a Navajo church, the Latina pastor of a Reformed “Bapt-a-costal” church in Chicago, and the millennial worship pastor of a Dutch immigrant congregation could all be part of the same denomination.

I have not even described every member of our advisory committee, let alone the diversity of churches in the CRC. *Is there anything in our worship that unites us?*

As the advisory committee spent time together and wrestled with that question, trying to understand each other more fully, we concluded that there is much more in our worship that unites than divides. What divides is what we readily see on the surface: varying worship expressions, music that sounds different, or sermons of varying lengths. But these things aren’t central, and they do change. What really matters is the Reformed theology undergirding all of our worship. Here are a few things that unite us:

1. God is central and active.

As Reformed folk, this is the air we breathe, so we might not recognize that this isn’t a given. We believe Scripture is primarily about what God has done and is doing and is not simply a collection of moral lessons. We believe that God is still active in the world around us and invites



Worship Ministries advisory members outside of Pillar Church in Holland, Mich. Pillar is a union church belonging to both the CRC and RCA.

us through the Spirit to join in that kingdom-building work. And we believe that same God invites us to worship.

2. Worship is a conversation with God.

Worship begins with God’s invitation and ends with God’s promise to go with us through the rest of the week. God speaks to us, and we respond.

3. Worship is trinitarian.

Worship is the work of the people in consort with the Trinity. God invites us; the Holy Spirit compels us and lifts up our prayers, praises, confessions, and laments to Christ. As Christians united with Christ, our worship becomes perfected in and through Christ, who presents it as a fragrant offering to God, who then through the Holy Spirit responds. This understanding of worship means that we don’t need to rely on a certain music sequence or the eloquence of a preacher for worship to happen. Worship happens in any

congregation that opens its heart to the Holy Spirit, listens for and to God, and responds appropriately.

4. Worship is pastoral and formative.

If we meet God in worship, if we believe the Holy Spirit is active, then it can’t help but be pastoral and spiritually formative. This is why we train our worship leaders and pastors. Theirs is a priestly task not to be taken lightly. We come to worship just as we are, with all the good and all the bad, and we bring it all to God, who cares about all of it.

5. Worship is a communal act.

God has always been in relationship with communities, small or large. It’s important, then, for the whole community—young and old, of varying abilities—to gather. All people are part of the community and need to be included. Because we understand that the Spirit is at work in worship through more than just the spoken Word, we also understand that there is a place for people who cannot comprehend intellectually, knowing that sometimes the Spirit speaks so deeply to them that they can leave with a better grasp of God’s message than those of us with full intellectual capacity.

So much more could be said about the centrality of the preached Word and the sacraments. But this much is clear: While as a denomination we might no longer all sing from the same hymnal or even in the same language, there is much more in our worship that unites us than divides us.

—Rev. Joyce Berger is director of Worship Ministries and editor of the journal *Reformed Worship*.

The View from Here

Speaking with a Reformed Accent

THE PAMPHLET *Who We Are and What We Believe* is a great reminder of our identity as the Christian Reformed Church. This pamphlet is available through Faith Alive and can also be accessed through the Digital Library in English, Korean, Spanish, and Chinese. We would all do well to read it once a year or so. Here's why.

First, it reminds us that our denominational identity is, at its foundation, squarely within the tradition of orthodox Christianity: *"the CRC's teachings have much in common with the beliefs of Christians all around the world"* (p. 13).

While the person you meet in the grocery store or the one you encounter on the other side of the ocean may not recognize the denominational name "Christian Reformed Church in North America," you can find common ground by simply saying your church is part of the Christian church found all around the world.

Yet there are unique areas of emphasis within the Reformed tradition that differentiate us from other types of Christians. The pamphlet goes on to explain these as Reformed accent marks. These include a focus on God's sovereignty, the covenant, and the kingdom. Each triggers thoughts for me.

For those aware of Reformed authors and leaders, citing Abraham Kuyper's assertion of **God's sovereignty** over "every square inch" is a simple and understandable phrase. It prompts in me a vision of a checkerboard of square inches—schools and shops, medical clinics and corporate boardrooms, beaches and ballrooms; the list goes on and on. God is sovereign over all of them.

God is a covenant-making God. We live within his promises, and therefore we have to be promise keepers as well.

With this in mind, it is also easy to suggest that Reformed Christians are seven-day-a-week Christians, not just on Sunday. The Christian life is pursued always in every area—and God is sovereign in them all!

A second accent mark is the **covenant**. I don't know about you, but I don't hear as many references to the covenant as I used to. Maybe it's because referring to Christian schools "for covenant youth" appeared to be exclusive (when in reality, Christian schools flow straight out of God's sovereignty). For whatever reason, our references have decreased, but God's promises have not.

God is a covenant-making God. We live within his promises, and therefore we have to be promise keepers as well: to train up children in God's way (Prov. 22:6), to love God above all and our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-39), and to give cheerfully as we have been blessed (2 Cor. 9:7), to name a few.

Finally, our Reformed accent places an emphasis on the **kingdom**, giving us responsibility for kingdom building between Christ's coming and his return. The pamphlet explains, *"Jesus came to inaugurate the kingdom of God. His victory over sin and death turned the tide. Though sin, brokenness, and*

evil are still evident in the world, God's kingdom is already here and is still coming. Someday Christ will come again, bringing the kingdom in full. In the meantime we pray and act for God's kingdom to come" (p. 16).

As a result, our denomination is active in some unique kingdom-building activities. We avoid any division between sacred and secular and instead encourage endeavors in "every sphere of human activity: art, media, publishing, law, education, labor relations, caregiving agriculture, business, social justice and politics. No area of human enterprise is exempt."

While we don't always agree about our individual and corporate kingdom-directed strategies, we do agree that the involvement of Christians in these spheres is part of our Reformed identity.

A once-a-year reading of this pamphlet is a good reminder that we have a Reformed identity that makes us part of Christ's church worldwide and allows us to speak with a decided accent. May we be confident in our identity in Christ and clear in voicing what God asks of us.



Steven Timmermans is the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Spanish and Korean translations of this article are available at TheBanner.org.

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Reformed Identity in Spanish Media Ministry

EVERY WEEK, Victor (not his real name) tunes in to one of his favorite television programs from his home in Chile. One day, the message felt a little too close to home.

“I was tempted to change the channel,” recalled Victor. “But I decided to keep listening.”

Victor watches *La Vida Ahora*, a video program produced by Back to God Ministries International’s Spanish-language ministry team. His strong reaction is exactly what Rev. Guillermo Serrano expects from the program’s content.

Serrano sees media ministry as a way to challenge Christians to embrace a more holistic faith and a Reformed way of thinking.

“In general, Latin America needs a Reformation,” said Serrano. “Many Christians believe their faith has everything to do with personal experiences and nothing to do with their broader society.”

Whether it’s on *La Vida Ahora* on television or one of BTGMI’s audio programs delivered through the radio or online, Serrano addresses very practical issues to a part of the world that he said “has a lot of Christian voices influencing it, but not many Reformed ones.”

“We aren’t talking about complex topics like theological doctrines,” Serrano added. Topics on BTGMI Spanish programs range from examining common holidays or festivals from a Christian perspective to looking at a political candidate’s platform as a Christian.

“When I first started sharing about these topics almost 30 years ago, they were seen as taboo,” said Serrano.



Rev. Serrano (right) plans to retire in 2019 after 30 years of media ministry with Back to God Ministries International.

“Over the years, I think people have warmed up to these ideas, but there is a lot of work to be done still.”

After nearly 30 years of leading BTGMI’s Spanish-language ministry, Serrano plans to retire at the end of 2019. But through BTGMI, the Christian Reformed Church will continue in this work of sharing the gospel through media with the Spanish-speaking world.

So which of these hot-button issues did Victor take issue with? An episode on loving, Christ-like relationships. Because Victor decided to continue listening to the episode, it convicted him in the ways he could be more loving to his family.

“You cannot imagine how powerful your program was,” said Victor. “Through the interviews, the

comments, the music, and your biblical explanations . . . Rev. Serrano helped me to see my own situation and led me to change my interactions with my wife and daughters. . . . Thank you, pastor, for being there when I needed it.”

—Brian Clark, Back to God Ministries International

Creating a Denominational Quilt

IN THE HEART of the newly renovated Christian Reformed Church in North America offices in Burlington, Ont., a quilt hangs prominently. It includes blocks from 65 Christian Reformed people from across North America.

“The variety of shapes and fabrics of a quilt beautifully reflect the diversity of the CRCNA,” said Dean Heetderks, art director for *The Banner*, who came up with the idea for a quilt when helping strategize art for the office walls. “The texture and warmth of the quilt also convey the welcome the Christian Reformed Church strives to offer.”

When the idea for a denominational quilt was shared on Facebook, Sheila Van Der Linden of Edmonton, Alta., agreed to coordinate the project. She wrote instructions for creating a block and asked quilters from across the continent to send blocks to her for assembly and quilting.

Quilt squares from 65 people representing at least 45 Christian Reformed congregations from Colorado to New York and from British Columbia to Nova Scotia arrived at Van Der Linden’s home and were incorporated into the final product.

Each square was done in the “log cabin” style and could use any light and dark fabrics the quilters chose. This would help to reflect the diversity of the Christian Reformed denomination. The only request was that the center of each block be a purple fabric to reflect the denomination’s unity.

“I chose purple to be in the center because it is a royal color and I wanted



this quilt to honor the King of kings. I also chose to have the center square larger than the strips around it because he is greater than us,” said Van Der Linden.

The finished quilt measures about 7.5 feet (2.3 meters) wide. The constant presence of purple holds all of the squares together, and there is great diversity in the rest.

“Each seam in this quilt, each stitch, I can honestly say, was made with love. And each person who contributed did so to honor the King of kings with their gift,” said Van Der Linden.

Van Der Linden finished the quilt on time for it to be presented during the

grand reopening celebrations of the building on Nov. 6, 2018. She noted that a few blocks are still arriving at her place in Edmonton. She plans to make a companion piece with them to be hung elsewhere in the building.

“What I especially love about this quilt is that it is a product of the combined efforts of people in the local church—and how it produces such a show-piece of beauty in this building,” said Canadian ministries director Darren Roorda. “It reminds us all, again and again, of the great things God can do through the combined efforts of Christian people in our churches.”

—Kristen deRoo Vanderberg,
CRC Communications

Loved by God

“DEPRESSION STOLE MY LIFE in every way imaginable,” said Leenza Thompson, a student at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ont. “[I felt] completely empty at some points, like I was just a shell of a human. . . . I really felt like I was a waste of space on earth. I felt that no one could ever love me.”

Then Thompson joined a discipleship huddle through Resonate Global Mission partner Geneva House campus ministry. There she began to discover her identity as loved by God and was able to take her first steps toward healing.

Thompson was raised in a Christian home but became close friends with an atheist during high school and started examining the Bible. Did God really create the universe? Did Jesus really walk on water, heal the sick, and raise the dead? “I decided there’s no way God could exist,” said Thompson. “There’s no way any of this is possible.”

At university, Thompson began questioning her worldview again. She struggled with unbearable depression, contemplating suicide and using a razor for self-harm. She searched for a way to break depression’s grip on her life.

At that point she noticed that Geneva House was hosting a seekers’ discipleship huddle for students to explore Christianity and ask tough questions. “I didn’t want to go,” said Thompson. “But as I found myself at this rock bottom place . . . I thought maybe they have something to offer me that I couldn’t find in my life.”

In the huddle, Thompson read through the Gospel of John. As weeks went by, she felt cared for by Geneva House leaders Julia Kooy and Kathy Doering, who prayed for her before every

meeting and encouraged her to apply Scripture to her own life.

In the midst of depression, Thompson heard God speaking to her. “One night in my room, I felt like God was saying, ‘Get out your Bible.’ It was late at night and I didn’t want to get out of my bed, but God just kept saying, ‘Get out your Bible. Get out your Bible.’”

Thompson listened to God and read her Bible. “The main message was that God loves me no matter what. It was really transforming. . . . God’s real.”

Thompson accepted Christ that night.

“It was visibly evident when we saw her at our next huddle,” said Kooy. “She looked different. There was this joy about her, this peace that we hadn’t seen.”

God told Thompson to throw out the razor blade she had been using to harm herself, and she hasn’t thought about self-harming since. Over the next few months, Thompson began to heal from depression—and God has transformed her life.

She joined other huddles, moved into a missional house on campus, and switched her major to religious studies. She hopes to one day earn a Master of Divinity with a concentration on Christian counseling.

—Cassie Westrate,
Resonate Global Mission



Leenza Thompson discovered her identity as loved by God through Resonate Global Mission partner Geneva House campus ministry.

For more news about the churches and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, visit thebanner.org. Or get the app by searching for "CRCNA Banner" in your app store.



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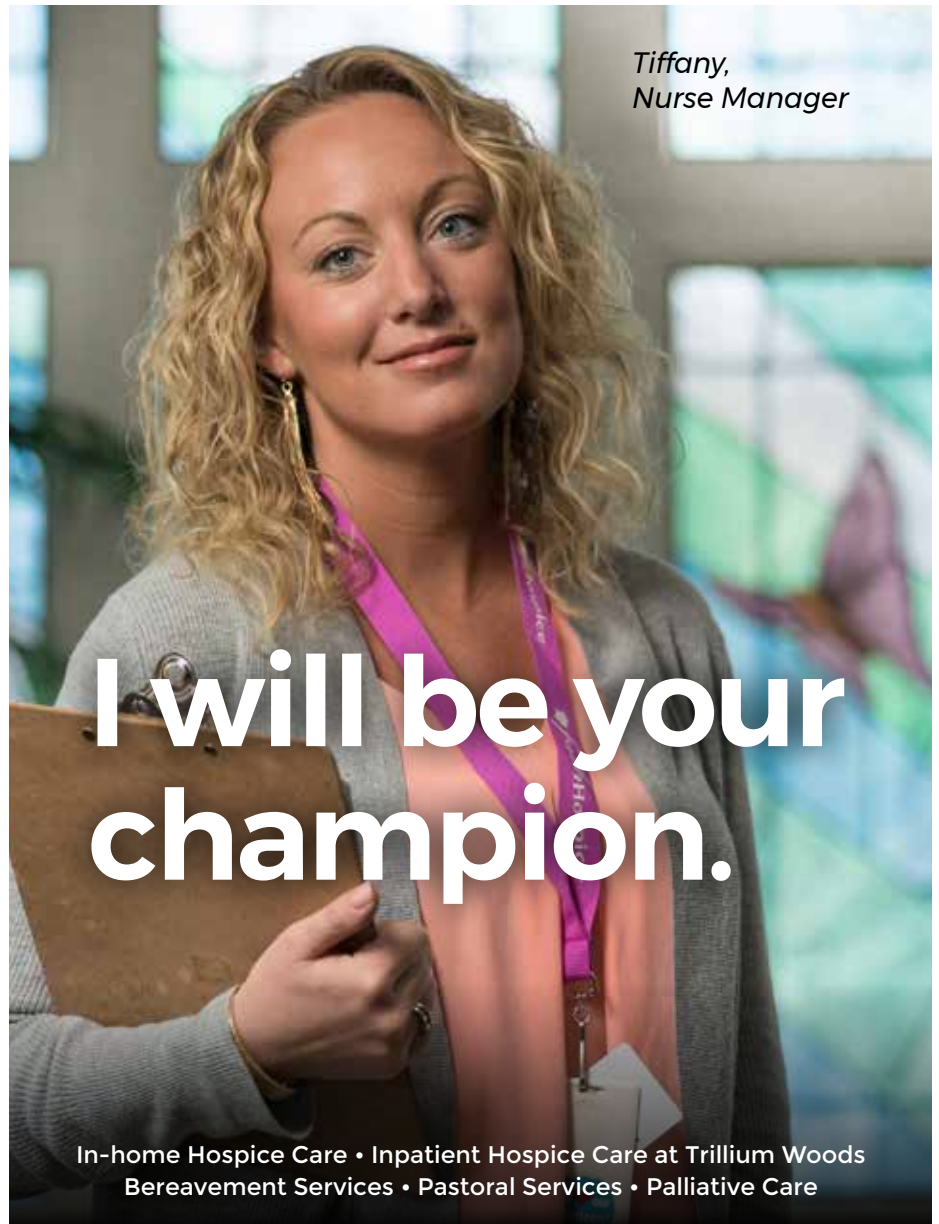
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Hide-and-Seek

Illustration for *The Banner* by Anita Barghigiani

YOU'VE PROBABLY PLAYED hide-and-seeK outside with your friends. But did you know that some animals are great at hiding too? A walking stick insect can blend in with its surroundings by pretending to be a stick. But some animals can hide by changing colors! Here are a few hide-and-seeK champions.

Octopus cyanea changes the color of its skin while hunting for crabs, fish, and shrimp. It does this to blend in with the sand, coral, and rocks on the ocean floor. This octopus, also known as the blue octopus, can change color in just a few seconds!

Crab spiders (also called flower spiders) can hide from insects by changing color. Crab spiders sit on flowers and wait for bugs to catch. They can change from yellow to white (or from white to yellow) in about 10 to 25 days. They live in gardens, woodlands, meadows, rainforests, and marshes.

Seahorses are tiny fish that can change color to blend in with their surroundings. They have even been known to turn bright red. They do this to hide from bigger animals or to send messages to other seahorses.

Pacific tree frogs live in wooded areas in North America. These tree frogs are green or brown with white bellies. They can change to tan, reddish, gray, cream, or black to match the forest around them. Pacific tree frogs can change color within one or two minutes!

Chameleons are the most well-known animals for changing color. Many chameleons change color when they are angry or afraid. There are more than 80 different kinds of chameleons in Africa alone.

God of Wonders

Isn't it amazing how God created these animals to change color in their own special ways? God shows us his power and might through every leaf, flower, and colorful creature in creation. Sometimes we may try to play hide-and-seeK with God. But the Bible teaches that God is never hard to find! Jeremiah 29:13 says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

Hide-and-SeeK Tree Frogs

Try this hide-and-seeK animal activity with your family and friends!

What you will need:

- » Green and brown tempera paint
- » Paintbrush
- » White, tan, or brown construction paper
- » Glue and scissors
- » Frog template from this website: bit.ly/2Ft37hf
- » Dirt, sticks, grass, leaves, etc. from your yard

What to do:

Have an adult help you print a frog template. Paint your frog green, brown, or tan. Let your picture dry. Once it is dry, cut out your frog and glue it to a sheet of construction paper (green, brown, or tan works best). Glue pieces of leaves, grass, and dirt to your paper to make the frog blend in with its surroundings.

Now play hide-and-seeK! Hide the frog picture in your yard and have a family member or friend try to find it. Take turns playing hide-and-seeK with your tree frog! **B**



Christin Baker is a full-time stay-at-home mom who also writes for Faith Alive. She is a member of Resurrection Fellowship Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



The Elephant and the Grass

When two elephants are fighting, it is the grass that suffers. The government and the LRA, of course, are the two elephants, and the people are the grass. The grass is crying out, "I am innocent! I am innocent!" And we are the voice of this grass.

—Monsignor Matthew Odong,
Catholic seminary rector

by David A. Hoekema

For 20 years the rebel movement of Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) held northern Uganda under a reign of terror, abducting boys to be child soldiers and girls to be sexual partners for rebel officers. In a nation that had already suffered from brutal autocracies such as that of Idi Amin, LRA raids on towns and villages—and equally savage responses from the Ugandan army—broke up families, destroyed crops, and killed or maimed anyone who resisted.

A large majority of Ugandans (85 percent, in the 2014 census) are Christian, while 15 percent follow Islam. Tension and competition have existed between religious groups for centuries—not just between

Muslims and Christians but between Protestants and Catholics. In the late 1980s, Joseph Kony claimed to be a spiritual leader who would purify the land and unite the people. He and his followers honored both Muslim and Christian holy days each Friday and Sunday. Like an Old Testament prophet, he called for prayer and fasting and strict adherence to the Ten Commandments. Unlike a biblical prophet, he claimed that a host of different spirits spoke to him each day, handing down rules for his followers and directing his military operations against the Ugandan government.

Few took Kony's religious claims seriously. But as the movement he started became more and more violent, the horrors inflicted by LRA soldiers fell on everyone in the Acholi region. In response to the rebellion, the government forced the entire rural population of nearly two million people to move to overcrowded camps for displaced persons—camps where they could not farm or do other work and where disease was rampant.

Meanwhile, the world outside East Africa paid little attention. Not until 2012, long after the LRA had stopped its raids, did the video "Kony 2012," with 100 million views, draw the attention of the world to the suffering

Ugandans had endured. The video's depiction of Africans suffering helplessly while they waited for American volunteers and soldiers to rescue them angered Ugandans.

In 2012 and again in 2014, I traveled to Uganda with students from Calvin College to learn about church-assisted development programs in collaboration with staff members of World Renew, a development agency of the Christian Reformed Church, and with Anglican and Catholic leaders whom I had met earlier. We asked our hosts and the people of villages we visited what kinds of development initiatives had strengthened their communities and provided lasting benefit.

Farmers told us remarkable stories of how they had learned to increase yields while protecting the soil and conserving water. Members of village savings and loan associations have been able to open small shops and earn enough to buy school uniforms and supplies for their children. The students gained a deeper understanding of what effective development programs—including World Renew, which works closely with the Church of Uganda (Anglican) in the north and Pentecostal churches in the south—can achieve while addressing



One of the most powerful channels for communicating with the outside world was devised not by religious leaders or politicians, but by village children.

persistent challenges of poverty and poor infrastructure.

In northern Uganda, we also heard stories of LRA violence. We talked to men who had been abducted to become child soldiers and then given a choice by their commanders: either beat an innocent person to death or be killed. We heard stories of young girls kidnapped at age 14 and forced to be sex slaves of LRA officers and servants of their older wives.

But we also heard another story—a story hardly known to the outside world even today. It is a story that inspires hope, not horror. It shows what can be accomplished when religious communities come together, overcoming centuries of mistrust, to seek reconciliation and peace. During one of the darkest periods of the conflict, in the late 1990s, leaders of the Protestant, Catholic, and Muslim communities came together to form a new organization, the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI).

Given Uganda's religious history, bringing Protestants, Catholics, and Muslims together was a remarkable achievement. After Catholic and Protestant missionaries came to the region in the mid-19th century, each group accused the other of kidnapping

pupils from mission schools to inflate the numbers of converts. Islam was present in Uganda long before the arrival of Christian missionaries, but even today Christians and Muslims view each other with mistrust and suspicion. Yet the leaders of the three communities had the courage to come together, knowing that they could accomplish far more together than they could alone.

The coalition set to work along three parallel tracks. First, it sought to offer help and comfort to those who were suffering the effects of the civil war, from LRA violence or from equally destructive government campaigns. Second, it brought the conflict to the attention of religious communities, governments, and nongovernmental organizations outside Uganda. Third—and most risky—ARLPI set out to bring the two sides together to resolve the conflict.

One of the most powerful channels for communicating with the outside world was devised not by religious leaders or politicians, but by village children. Outside the larger towns, LRA raids were a constant danger, and children were far more likely to be abducted than adults. So the children put blankets under their arms and began walking every evening to the larger

towns, five or 10 miles away. They would sleep in bus parks or church compounds for the night and set out early to report for morning assembly at their village schools. At first the residents of the towns were wary: Were these LRA child soldiers in disguise? But religious leaders welcomed them. Pastors and priests and imams would greet the children arriving from their villages, provide water and food, and join them to sleep outside. Peace initiative leaders sent reports and pictures to colleagues abroad, and some international media picked up the story.

In the early 2000s, the Ugandan government claimed that its military victory over the LRA movement was almost complete, but travel was too risky for foreign journalists to see the situation for themselves. Images of churchyards and bus stations filled with children seeking safety by becoming “night commuters” showed that the suffering continued.

Meanwhile, leaders of the peace initiative continued to offer other forms of assistance: helping to reunite families of abductees who had escaped, trying to locate abducted children, and caring for those whose homes and crops had been destroyed. They pressed on too in their efforts to bring the two sides together—the most difficult and dangerous part of their work.

Government officials agreed to meet with the religious leaders of the peace initiative, but they insisted that negotiation was useless. Only military force, they said, could end the rebellion. Moreover, the government suspected ARLPI leaders of being secret sympathizers with the rebels simply because they shared their Acholi ethnic identity.

Meeting with the LRA was far more difficult. Time and again ARLPI representatives were taken blindfolded to remote camps, uncertain whether they would return alive. LRA commanders suspected the pastors and priests of being government informants. Kony refused to attend the meetings,

fearing betrayal, and it was never clear whether the representatives he sent had the authority to make agreements.

And yet the talks continued. Ceasefires were announced—and then promptly broken. Plans for an LRA withdrawal were discussed but not implemented. At last both sides agreed to formal negotiations to be held in Juba, in the region (now nation) of South Sudan. Between 2004 and 2006, a plan for LRA withdrawal was drafted. These talks were convened by the Sudanese government and facilitated by the Catholic lay community of Sant’Egidio. At that point, ARLPI, having prepared the way, stepped into the background.

Beginning in 2006, men and women who had been abducted to LRA camps were released, and the LRA withdrew from Uganda. Travel in the region once again became possible. Residents of the government camps for internal refugees returned to their farms and villages and their former lives as farmers and traders, even though many homes and shops had been destroyed and many farms taken over by squatters. A small band of Kony’s followers remains with him to this day—perhaps 100 in all, staging occasional raids for food and supplies and then retreating into hiding in remote regions of neighboring countries.

The work of the peace initiative was far from finished, however. One of the founders of the group told me: “It will take 50 years to rebuild. The guns are silent, yes. But think of what the guns have done to the people.”

After the LRA withdrew, the leaders of the peace initiative changed their focus. New priorities included rehabilitation of returning abductees, resolution of land disputes, empowerment of women, and promotion of sustainable agriculture.

A top priority today, staff members told me, is creating interfaith peace committees in every district and every village. Too often, they said, ARLPI initiatives have been planned and begun from the top. But lasting change

happens only when local communities assess their own needs and take action.

The story of ARLPI and its faithful witness to peace and reconciliation, beginning in the midst of one of the world’s most savage civil wars, shows how powerful the witness of religious communities can be when they join forces in pursuit of peace. Where conflict between Christian and Muslim communities flares into violence in many regions of the world, the example of northern Uganda shows how much can be accomplished when they come together, respecting each other’s deep differences but seeking ways of following God’s will together. And contrary to the impression given by Western media reports and videos such as “Kony 2012,” the success of the peace initiative shows that African communities can resolve seemingly impossible problems when they use their own resources and put their own vision of a better future into practice.


The most urgent crisis facing Uganda and its neighbors today is the massive exodus from war-torn neighbors such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. Fleeing civil war and political repression or simply escaping from dire poverty and crop failure, 1.4 million refugees are seeking a new start in Uganda, according to United Nations figures. But even as the number of global refugees swells, American doors are being slammed: In the fiscal year that ended in September 2018, only 22,491 refugees were admitted, the lowest number in more than two decades.

During our stay, my students and I received permission to visit a camp for refugees from civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Uganda, local and national governments work together, with assistance from international agencies, to provide temporary food and shelter to everyone who seeks refuge from violence at home. Within a few months each family is provided a plot of land

and materials with which to build a home. Pastors from nearby villages come to the camps to lead singing and prayer and to invite the residents to their churches.

When we expressed our amazement at the openness of Ugandans to these newcomers, local government officials responded, “This is our obligation under the Charter of the United Nations, which Uganda has ratified. So we cannot turn them away.”

The East African region is under enormous strain as the flow of refugees from countries wracked by conflict grows larger and larger. But the same spirit of cooperation and compassion so evident in the work of the peace initiative and at all of the villages we visited were present in the refugee camp. When people are suffering, why should it matter whether they are Protestant or Catholic or Muslim, whether they are Congolese or Somalian or Sudanese? They are our brothers and sisters, so we must help them.

In providing relief from LRA violence, in working courageously for peace, in helping rural residents provide for themselves, in assisting those fleeing for their lives—in all these contexts the religious communities of Uganda, and many local authorities as well, showed by their actions what it means to love our neighbors. Their grassroots example—grass that was trampled but sprang up again—inspires our own call to seek peace. 



David A. Hoekema is a professor of philosophy emeritus, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. His book *We Are the Voice of the Grass: Interfaith Peace Activism in Northern Uganda* was published in 2019.

Trying to Do 'the Right Thing'

Eventually this trying, trying, trying to do right for the flourishing of all members of creation became its own idol.



After working in various roles as an educator/farmer/community builder, Lindsay Vander Hoek is experimenting with a small-scale farm in Alberta. She also is a holistic nutritionist.

I AM ALWAYS AMAZED when I see a cross-cut of a purple cabbage—intricate white and magenta waves glistening with juice. And when I pull a bright carrot out of dark black soil, I can't help wondering: How did it get so orange? Our faith encourages us to delight in the world around us as God does, to see goodness in God's creation rather than dreaming of some other place. The creation story, the psalms, and passages such as Colossians 1—"all things have been created through him and for him" (v. 16)—show God's intention for creation to flourish.

Jesus set the example for us: matter matters. He healed people's bodily ailments. He asked his disciples to remember him in the acts of eating bread and drinking wine. In his parables he used examples from the material world—seeds and planting and harvesting—to communicate spiritual truths. And in coming to earth as God's Son, Jesus himself became matter. Even the new creation, we believe, will have physical attributes transformed from this world.

Because God in Christ became flesh—demonstrating God's love for creation and its value—I have noticed that what, how, and with whom I eat matters. If the carrot I eat is grown in healthy soil, it will be nutrient-rich, making me healthy. Healthy people can work to create healthy soil and healthy relationships with others. A simple equation for this intricate relationship web is healthy soil = healthy carrot = healthy me.

But my relationship with what and how I eat can be healthy or unhealthy. Am I eating with gratitude and appreciation or out of fear and anxiety?

My movement toward becoming a "theological food police" began

in a university "Philosophy of the Environment" class. I was appalled to learn about the treatment of animals in certain intensive livestock operations. I stopped eating meat from the supermarket and started my journey toward fixing the world. Simple, right? I wanted to be a part of the "flourishing of all creation," including the lives of animals I was eating, instead of supporting a system that seemed to focus only on the bottom line.

Long story short: I tried to do "the right thing." How were the people treated who grew those bananas? Did you know celery is part of the pesticide-laden "dirty dozen"? Does that strawberry come from land that should naturally be desert? But eventually this trying, trying, trying to do right for the flourishing of all members of creation became its own idol. It turned out to be the opposite of Christian freedom instead of aligning with God's example of love. Trying to do the right thing—eating the "clean fifteen" (ewg.org), seeking out grass-fed beef—has been tiring. And so far it has not fixed the world.

So I continually ask for God's grace, surrendering any delusion that my calculated, often frustrated actions are bringing about shalom. I trust there are better ways than calculating and counting to participate in creation's flourishing. Indeed, there are many broken relationships in our world—not only in how workers, animals, and soil are treated, but also in the way we expect nutrient-rich food to be inexpensive. I ask God to help transform my actions around food justice—actions I *know* God cares deeply about, because he became flesh to prove it—into acts of gratitude and praise rather than responsibility to fix the world. **B**

The Power of the Holy Spirit

We can expect
the wholeness
we will see in the
new heaven and
new earth to be
manifest in our
world now.



John Lee is the head of the Upper School at The Geneva School of Manhattan, a Christian classical school. He also serves with Ben Spalink at City Grace Church in the East Village.

LAST MONTH I was on a Skype call with a former congregant who now works at a publishing house in Seoul, Korea. After our perfunctory greetings, he wanted me to meet his illustrator. I asked her how she was doing, and, in a moment of honesty, she said she'd been suffering from acid reflux. I asked if she wanted me to pray for her over our internet connection, and she said yes. I felt a bit odd, sort of like a 1980s TV evangelist, as I instinctively raised my hand and proceeded to pray for her. I'm sure that all she saw was a huge hand on her computer screen. Afterward, she said she felt almost completely better. Within a few minutes I received an email from my friend. He confirmed her account and said that the pain in his illustrator's throat, which she had not mentioned, was also completely gone. She was in shock. I praised God.

I am a Reformed pastor, ordained in the Presbyterian church. My great-grandfather converted to Christianity in the early 1900s in the Pyongyang revivals in what is now North Korea. He became a pastor, served the poor, and died a martyr. I attended Westminster Theological Seminary and devoured the works of Reformed authors. I have also experienced the power and person of the Holy Spirit through deliverances, healings, and other supernatural things. These days, I am experiencing the power and person of the Holy Spirit in the heart of New York City.

God made me an inquisitive person. I want to know how things work. I do not like theory for its own sake, but I want to know the theory behind practical things. Intellectual integrity is important to me. That means, if people are experiencing God in supernatural

ways, I want to know the theological basis. After much reflection, I have concluded that the blessings of the new age are a present reality because the kingdom of God is here. Mark's gospel makes that clear.

Mark 1:15 pronounces the inauguration of the kingdom of God. John the Baptist prepares the way by preaching and baptizing people. Jesus' first action after this announcement was to call disciples to himself. Shortly thereafter he began to perform miracles: driving out a demon in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-28) and healing many people, including Simon's mother-in-law (1:29-34), a leper (Mark 1:40-45), and a paralytic (Mark 2:1-12). This pattern continues in almost every chapter of Mark's gospel. The cumulative point is clear: the kingdom of God demonstrates the rule of God by manifesting the blessings of the new age. Luke confirms this picture as well. In Luke 11, Jesus is caught in a debate with the crowd. Some say he drives out demons by the power of Beelzebub. Jesus responds by saying, "If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). According to this logic, the very casting out of demons proves the reality of his reign; the kingdom of God is here.

I am fully aware that not all people who ask for healing are healed. A while ago I prayed for a friend who had just returned from the mission field after six years. I prayed for his shoulder and wrist. Almost immediately, God took care of the shoulder, but nothing happened to his wrist. I do not know why. But this pattern of "success" and "failure" does not bother me unduly because the kingdom of God has been inaugurated but not yet consummated. Theologically I understand that there



Photo by Kevin Dooley / Flickr

will be both times of healing and times when the baggage and brokenness of the old age persist.

Here is where we need to decide whether to accent the “already” or the “not yet” character of the kingdom of God. It will come as no surprise that I accent the former.

If the book of Acts is an example of what a community that believes in the power of the kingdom looks like, then the blessings of the new age should accompany the church. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Spirit of God is the engine and conductor of the book. Immediately after the pouring out of the Spirit (Acts 2), the fledgling church begins to grow.

Through the ministry of Peter, John, and the other apostles, there are mass conversions, notable acts of generosity, and signs and wonders in Jerusalem (Acts 2-6). Even when persecution comes to the church, the work of the Spirit continues: Stephen stands faithful before an angry mob (Acts 7); Samaria receives the gospel through Philip (Acts 8); and Paul, one of the main detractors of the church, is converted (Acts 9). The Spirit also brings Gentiles into the church (Acts 10-12) and starts a Gentile mission through Paul (Acts 13-27). In Acts, we see that the rule of God has exploded into the world through the power of the Spirit.

I’ve heard a lot of messages about being faithful. To be honest, I’ve preached a lot of those messages myself. I believe from the bottom of my heart that our faithfulness honors God and that God blesses it. I’ve also heard my fair share of messages on being fruitful by abiding in Christ. I wholeheartedly agree with these messages as well. What I’d like to add to both of those is the importance of being filled by the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 commands us to be filled with the Spirit. A grammatical understanding of the verse is helpful here. First, notice that the verse is an imperative. God is commanding us to be filled. To be faithful, we need to be filled. Second, the imperative is also in the passive voice. This means that the act of filling has to be done *to* us. We cannot fill ourselves. Here is where prayer comes into play. We need to pray, wait upon God, and take steps of faith.

If we believe that God has already inaugurated his reign and rule on earth, then the primary way to unlock the power of the Holy Spirit is through our believing actions. We have to take concrete steps of faith. We should *expect* the supernatural as we minister to people. We can pray for people who are sick, for those who are depressed, or down, or defeated. More than that, we can expect the wholeness we will see in the new heaven and new earth

to be manifest in our world now. We have actually prayed this prayer a thousand times—“Let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

So what will we do when we feel that God is leading us to that person on the train or bus? How about the sick little girl with her mother at the hospital? Or the family member dealing with addiction? Or those dealing with habitual sins in our communities? Do we believe that God can bring healing, deliverance, and wholeness in our lives? Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God can raise up church that is faithful, fruitful, and filled. **B**

1. If you have ever witnessed or personally experienced something supernatural, such as a miraculous healing, describe what happened. How did it occur? How was God glorified through it?
2. If, as the author suggests, the kingdom of God is both “already” and “not yet,” which part have you been emphasizing in your spiritual life? Why?

[READ MORE](#) [ONLINE](#)

Mind the (Generation) Gap

WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN you live in a Google world with the knowledge of the universe at your fingertips? What if the super diversity of religions and opinions leads you to believe that the most important virtue is to accept differences in other people? What if the shortcomings of government, the church, the economic system, and the family itself are on such display that you mistrust *anything* institutional? And what if social media allows you to tell your own story in any way?

What do you get? You get a millennial.

Millennials were born between 1980 and 2000. Author David John Seel Jr. calls them “New Copernicans” because, like Copernicus (1473-1543), they sense that the people in charge have misrepresented the fundamental nature of reality. Copernicus saw that the earth is not, contrary to accepted wisdom, the center of the universe. The New Copernicans see that the logical, Enlightenment mind is not, contrary to accepted wisdom, the only way to understand the universe.

In *The New Copernicans: Millennials and the Survival of the Church*, Seel describes this as an immense cultural shift that’s been called post-modernism, post-Christianity, or

post-Enlightenment. Seel calls it a “frame shift” and believes that it is not *caused* by millennials. Rather, it is *carried* by millennials as they encounter a world that features, among other things, the realities mentioned above.

Seel sees lots of potential here. He sees this shift as a return to right-brain thinking, a recovery of the artistic and poetic mind, a renewed openness to mystery. For Seel, this could be a return to a more Jesus-shaped church.

He believes that the church, particularly the evangelical church, must repent of its cozy relationship with black-and-white, “us/them” thinking if it is to remain vibrant in the age of millennials. The church must admit that life is full of mystery and paradox. It must reduce its dependence on institutions, engage pluralism with confident grace, and present the Bible as God’s story rather than as a collection of theological concepts and proof texts.

Sometimes I thought that Seel was too soft on millennials and too hard on the evangelical church. And sometimes I paused in my reading just to appreciate the dots he was connecting for me.

At the end of the book I celebrated two things. First, I now had a clear language for all those fuzzy conversations about the decline of the North American church. Second, I found hope in the Great Story that God tells and in the ways he gives us to learn and speak it. (Thomas Nelson) **B**



Dave Den Haan has been a Christian Reformed Church pastor for 24 years, currently serving as a ministry consultant with the office of Pastor Church Resources of the CRCNA.

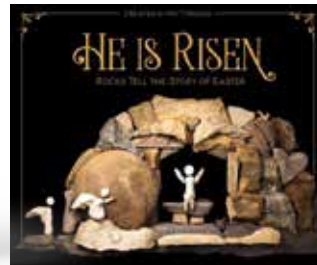
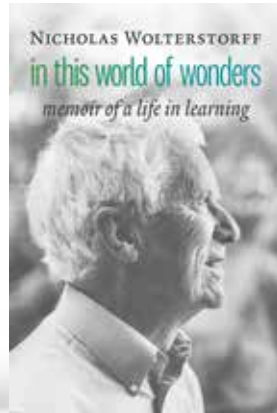


Three Hours: Sermons for Good Friday

by Fleming Rutledge

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

As Rutledge explores topics such as the nature of forgiveness, justification, and atonement in seven meditations, she seeks to help readers better understand God’s sacrifice of Jesus. She does so in relevant, contemporary language, peppering her exposition with current examples. Rutledge compares the narratives of the gospel writers, pointing out that in each, this truth emerges: “The crucifixion is not just an unfortunate thing that happened to Jesus on his way to the resurrection . . . It is precisely *on the cross that the work of Jesus is carried through to its completion.*” Readers will find this a worthwhile, spiritually enlightening space to spend time in during the Lenten season. (Eerdmans)



Phoenix

by *Pedro the Lion*

reviewed by Jordan Petersen

In the late 1990s, pop culture sold the sacred and secular as mutually exclusive; Pedro the Lion complicated that binary. But after the band's creative force, David Bazan, experienced a crisis of faith, he began performing under his own name. Now Pedro the Lion is back with a concept album about Bazan's hometown, sparked by a timely visit to the city during a long and difficult tour. Each song is a reflection on the past that reveals itself to be just as much about the present. In this visit Bazan is able to sustain feelings or hopes that he hasn't been able to in a long time—it feels like "someone is finally listening," he says in "Tracing the Grid." It feels like a hopeful and nervous push toward permanence, a fitting way to end an unlikely trip back to an old place using an old name. (Polyvinyl)

In This World of Wonders

by *Nicholas Wolterstorff*

reviewed by Otto Selles

In this memoir, Nicholas Wolterstorff offers a series of vignettes describing his humble beginnings, his education, and phases in his illustrious career as a philosophy professor. His journey reveals a grace-filled life committed to the "disinterested love of understanding." This attitude has led Wolterstorff to engage in groundbreaking work in an astonishing range of fields. While this memoir will be of particular interest to CRC readers, it is written for a broad audience, presenting a Reformed worldview and complex philosophical concepts with great clarity. (Eerdmans)

He Is Risen: Rocks Tell the Story of Easter

by *Patti Rokus*

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Patti Rokus has produced another remarkable children's picture book combining her visionary rock sculptures, engaging narrative, and Scripture texts to tell the story of Jesus' healing and teaching ministry; his death and resurrection; and his ascension into heaven and promised return. The book concludes with a question that invites readers to respond to the gospel: "How will you show your love for Jesus?" The accompanying rock art reveals the truth that all our acts of love originate in God's love for us. Ages 4 and up. (Zondervan)

Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse

reviewed by Kristy Quist

Brilliant animation combines a comic book aesthetic with modern techniques, bringing the Spider-Man story to life in creative new ways. After teen Miles Morales is turned into Spider-Man, he meets Spider-characters from alternate dimensions. The realization that he isn't alone and that not all of them are in possession of the same skills encourages him to begin a task that seems impossible. When so many young people feel like the problems facing our world are insurmountable, it's a breath of fresh air to see this kind of empowerment and encouragement. (Sony)

The Lowdown

Uncommon: The newest, newly translated title in the Abraham Kuyper Collected Works of Public Theology is *Common Grace: God's Gift for a Fallen World (Vol. 2)*, due in stores on April 17. *On Education* will be out in May. (Lexham Press)

Main Event: Christians and indie pop-rock bandmates Mike Mains and the Branches release their new album, *When We Were in Love*, on April 5. (Tooth and Nail)

Grumpy No More: In *Grumpy Mom Takes a Holiday*, author Valerie Woerner draws on her own experience to help moms find joy in the daily grind of motherhood. (Tyndale)

Faithful Mom: *This Is Us* favorite Chrissy Metz stars in *BREAKTHROUGH* as Joyce Smith, the mother of a 14-year-old boy who falls through the ice on a lake and experiences miraculous healing. Coming to theaters April 17. (20th Century Fox)

Do All Good People Go to Heaven?

The real question about eternal life, then, is not whether anyone can ever be good enough to get into heaven. We can't.



Christopher Schoon is lead pastor at First Hamilton (Ont.) CRC and has taught mission and leadership courses at Redeemer University College and Calvin Theological Seminary.

AT ONE POINT or another, most of us wonder about the afterlife. What happens when we die? Will we remember our lives from here on earth? Will we recognize loved ones? What about our pets?

Such wondering can become perplexing, and even the mention of eternity can trigger a sense of anxiety. Who can really comprehend living forever? And, as if eternity itself isn't big enough to wrap our heads around, we also wonder where we'll end up. Will I go to heaven or to hell? Will the things I've done wrong damn me forever? Is there any hope for me? What about my coworkers? My neighbors? My loved ones? What about people who've never heard the gospel? Will every good person make it into heaven?

The Bible engages these conversations as well. God has "set eternity in the human heart," writes the author of Ecclesiastes (3:11). Abraham appeals to God's mercy for his nephew Lot in the face of divine judgment against Sodom and Gomorrah: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" (Gen. 18:23). Hezekiah begs for God's salvation on the grounds that those in the grave cannot praise God (Isa. 38:18). Peter, after Jesus restores him, wonders what will happen with another disciple: "Lord, what about him?" (John 21:21)

In the gospel stories, a couple of people come right out and ask Jesus: "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" In other words, what's the minimum amount of good I need to do to get into heaven? Just how good is good enough? We know we're not perfect, but we wonder if there is any possible way for our good deeds to outweigh our sins.

Jesus' response to one such questioner, a rich young ruler, is helpful here. He says, "Why do you call me good? No

one is good—except God alone" (Luke 18:19). By responding this way, Jesus invites the man to consider three realities. The first is whether he really trusts God to be good. Second, by calling Jesus "good teacher," does the man recognize Jesus to be God in the flesh? Third, is the man willing to see that he and the rest of humanity are so caught up in sin that none of us can ever be considered good?

The man eventually goes away sad because he cannot imagine that God will be good enough for him to risk letting go of his financial security blanket.

With compassion, Jesus teaches his followers: "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" To which they respond in fearful amazement: "If the rich—those with every earthly advantage—can't get into heaven, what hope is there for the rest of us?"

Jesus reassures them and us: "What is impossible with humanity is possible with God." In other words, eternal life is God's gift out of the goodness of God's character and not something we can secure through our own striving (See Eph. 2:1-10).

The real question about eternal life, then, is not whether anyone can ever be good enough to get into heaven. We can't. No human is good enough. The real question is whether we will trust that what God has done through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection is good enough. Will we risk letting go of our security blankets—money, education, family connections, spiritual practices, or other markers we commonly use to prove our goodness? Will we trust that Jesus "is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2)? **B**

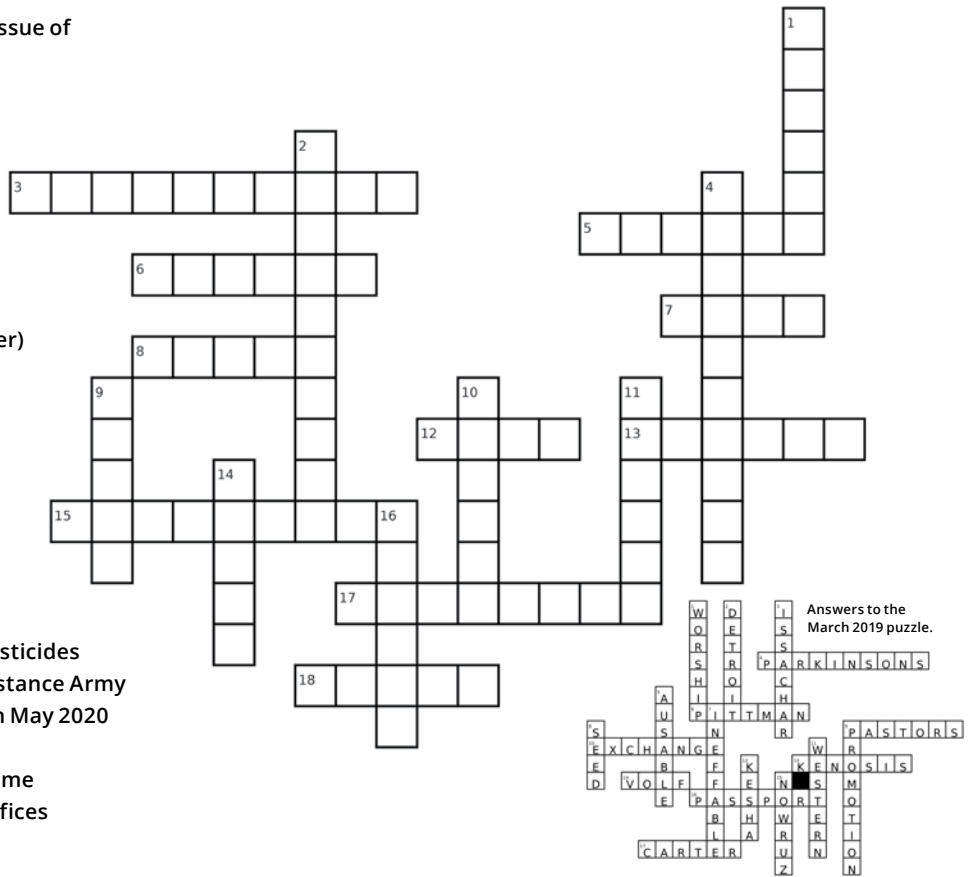
Find clues to this crossword puzzle in this issue of *The Banner*. See the answers next month!

Down:

- 1. Kids' Food _____
- 2. He realized the Earth was not the center of the universe
- 4. A movement encouraging people to live with as few possessions as possible
- 9. Abuse of _____
- 10. _____ Grace (a book by Abraham Kuyper)
- 11. Speaking with a Reformed _____
- 14. Poet Ezra _____
- 16. Power of the Holy _____

Across:

- 3. Canadian _____ Ministry Committee
- 5. Our identity in _____
- 6. A Standard Poodle who joins in worship
- 7. Pedro the _____
- 8. Dirty _____, a list of foods tainted by pesticides
- 12. Joseph _____, leader of the Lord's Resistance Army
- 13. Will change from college to university in May 2020
- 15. Tiny fish that can change color
- 17. Lansing students eat breakfast at this time
- 18. What hangs in the Burlington CRCNA offices



Think you can change the world with a melody?

We do.

CHANGE can be big, like symphony orchestra big. Or it can be small, like living room jam session small. It's about what you choose to do on the one hand, and who you are on the other. We are more than our jobs, and God has a calling for each of us, wherever we go.

That changes everything.

Starting with you.



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What Is Time?

What is time?
Time is a memory
A special day
A day in which
we all go
to a new world

This is our world
This is a great time
Will I leave a memory?
Is today my day?
It depends which
way we will go.

Can we go?
Will we see the world?
If it is never the right time,
How will we make a new memory?
Tomorrow is a new day
Live or die; we will see which

Smile! It is a new day, in which
we will go.
We will see the world!
Have you seen the time?
Can we make another memory?
How are we going to end this day?

Is this a new day?
A day in which
we will go
and leave this world?
Now may be the time
Is this my last memory?

Am I preserved in someone's memory?
I have finished my last day
And now I know which
way to go.
I have seen the world,
I will remember it to the end of time.

At the end of time, at the end of the day,
Which memory of the world will I keep?
I will try to keep all of them, until I have to go.

Laney Van Voorst is a seventh-grader at Sioux Center Christian School, where she wrote this sestina for her literature class. She is a professing member of Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Center, Iowa.



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Children

DEADLINES: 4/8/19 for May; 5/6/19 for June
Subject to availability. Details online.

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PRICES: Most ads are \$0.40^{US} per character (min. 150 characters including punctuation and spaces). A discounted rate of \$0.32^{US} per character and \$50 per photo applies to Anniversaries, Birthdays, Obituaries, Denominational and Classical Announcements, and Congregational

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General

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER (U. S.) In May 1988 the President of the United States signed into law a bill establishing the first Thursday of May as a National Day of Prayer. This year the National Day of Prayer falls on Thursday, May 2. The synod of the CRC has urged churches in the United States "to observe faithfully any national day of prayer which the United States President publicizes to the nation" (Acts of Synod 1969). "Our churches must be open to our congregations and our fellow [citizens] on such occasions, when God in his providence leads those in civil authority to call our citizenry to pray. We must pray for and with our country" (Acts of Synod 1958). Steven R. Timmermans Executive Director.

FINANCIAL AID

CLASSIS ILLIANA STUDENT FUND Students from Classis Illiana who are preparing for serving in ordained or unordained roles in the CRC are invited to apply for financial aid from the student fund. Contact committee chair Dan Roels, pastor.dan.roels@gmail.com, 708-474-9838.

MEETINGS OF CLASSIS

THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF CLASSIS ZEELAND will be Thursday, May 16, 2019, at The River CRC of Allegan. Agenda deadline is April 3. Rev. Ronald J. Meyer, S. C.

Employment

CHURCH RELATIONS LIAISON Calvin Theological Seminary is searching for a Canadian Church Relations Liaison responsible for furthering our mission by promoting CTS's strategic initiatives, identifying new ministry leaders, and building connections between ministry networks starting in June 2019. More information can be found on the job opening page of our website (www.calvinseminary.edu).

KINDERGARTEN TEACHER Zuni Christian Mission School is seeking to hire a full-time kindergarten teacher in our unique mission setting for the 2019-2020 school year. To learn more, visit zunichristianmission.org or email tbecksvoot@zunichristianmission.org

TRUE BLUE CAREGIVERS is hiring. We provide non-medical care for seniors in their home. Duties include: light housekeeping, meal preparation and help with personal care. All jobs are part time and in the Grand Rapids area. Pay is 13-16 dollars an hour. Send inquiries : truebluecaregivers@gmail.com or call 616-406-6819 for more information.

Church Anniversary

CHURCH'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

LUVERNE CRC of Luverne, MN invites you to join them in celebrating 75 years of God's faithfulness on May 5, 2019 from 9:30 A. M. to 1:00 P. M.

CHURCH'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

SILVER SPRING CRC in Maryland is celebrating 50 years of God's faithfulness on the weekend of April 27-28. For RSVPs or to share memories please visit our webpage at www.ssrc.org/anniversary.

Birthdays

100TH BIRTHDAY

ALICE KLEIN SLAGER will reach her 100th birthday on March 3. Celebrating with her will be Ken, her husband of 68 years, her seven children and their spouses, 21 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren. Alice would love to receive birthday greetings at 2111 Raybrook SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

95TH BIRTHDAY

DORIS BOELENS (BALGOOYEN) will celebrate her 95th birthday on April 17. As a life long CRC member and prayer warrior her family gives thanks for her faithful example, love and kind spirit.

90TH BIRTHDAY

DONALD GENZINK of Holland, MI celebrates his 90th birthday on April 23. His wife, Alice, 6 children and their spouses, 24 grand children and their spouses, and 41 great grand children thank God for this milestone. To God be the glory!

Obituaries

DE VOS, Rosemary Fay, age 89, of Grand Rapids, MI, went home to be with her Lord on Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2019. She was preceded in death by her husband R. Jack De Vos and is survived by her sister-in-law Gladys De Vos; three children, Jessica and John De Ruiter, Chris and Barb De Vos, and Brian and Kristy De Vos; eight grandchildren; and seven great grandchildren.

EYZENGA, Catharinus (Chris), 86, of Surrey, BC, went to be with the Lord on February 8. He is survived by his wife Sophie (Zandbergen); his sister-in-law Pat Eyzenga; his children Pete (Nancy) Eyzenga, Clarence (Linda) Eyzenga, Cora (Ken) Denhollander, Ed (Pauline) Eyzenga; his 14 grandchildren and their

spouses; and his 6 great grandchildren. He "fought the good fight, [he has] finished [the] course, [he has] kept the faith." #239-9080 159 St Surrey, BC V4N 5T6.

GRITTER Jean Ann, age 86, of San Jose, CA passed away peacefully in her home on September 15, 2018. She was preceded in death by her husband Roy John and daughter Marianne in 2014. She is survived by her daughters and grandchildren. Suzanne (Dr. Matthew Gritter) and Hollianne Gritter, Louanne Ginocchio (husband Michael) (Michael, Jr. & Jessica Ginocchio), and Julianne Coggan (Dr. James Coggan & fiancé Dr. Ashley Shah and Jeffrey & Katelyn Coggan). Brother David (Lois) Hollemans of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

VANDER WEIDE Joan (DeVoogd), age 85, went to be with her Lord November 29, 2018. Missing her are her loving husband of 65 years, John, children Paul and Nancy, John and Julie, Rae Ann and Ed, Pete and Sue, 38 grandchildren, 12 great grandchildren, and 3 great great grandchildren. Greeting her in heaven is son Daniel. She was a joy-filled member of East Paris CRC. Joan brought life and color through painting and gardening, and her welcoming smile lit up a room. She was a good listener to all she met, graciously sharing her wisdom and time.

ZYLSTRA, Ron "Doc" 80 of Lynden, WA passed away in his sleep Dec. 20, 2018. Survived by wife Joyce (Mellema) of 60 yrs; children Doreen (Lauren) Meenderinck, Karrin (Dean) Simpson, Tim (Michelle) Zylstra & Tom (Bridget) Zylstra, 15 grandchildren & 3 great-grandchildren. Preceded in death by daughter-in-law Trisha (Bosman) Zylstra & grandson Fletcher Paul Zylstra. Brothers Dr. Lou Zylstra, Ed Zylstra & sister Bea Stadt.

Church Positions Available

PASTOR Iron Springs CRC is seeking a full-time pastor to deliver God's word through biblical, practical, and relevant preaching. Iron Springs is located in a vibrant agricultural community in Southern Alberta. We are looking for a servant leader with a desire to know their flock and develop people to share God's love with our congregation and our community. Please contact Glorianna Scholten at 403-738-4746 gloriannascholten@gmail.com for more information.

PASTOR Terra Ceia CRC in Pantego, NC is seeking a dynamic, personable, full time pastor committed to help us grow in God's word and make a difference in our community. We are committed Christians seeking a strong

leader. For more information please contact the search committee at bkelder23@gmail.com, please visit terraceiacrc.org. Address: 3298 Terra Ceia Rd. Pantego, NC 27860

LEAD PASTOR: First Cutlerville CRC in Byron Center, Michigan is seeking a lead pastor to join their church family. The people of First Cutlerville seek to glorify God by worshipping Him wholeheartedly, witnessing His love to all people and by working to bring His kingdom to every area of life. Please visit <https://www.fcvrc.org/> and email search@fcvrc.org for more information.

PASTOR Luctor CRC of Prairie View, KS is seeking a full-time pastor. Inquiries can be directed to Jay VanDerVeen at jayvdv@icloud.com or by calling 785-973-8028.

SEEKING PASTOR Trinity CRC, Fremont, MI. Our former pastor has retired and we have begun the search for a pastor. If interested, please contact Todd DeKryger at tdekryger@ncats.net or (231) 286-8778.

DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP MINISTRY: The First Christian Reformed Church, Sioux Falls, SD, is seeking a full-time Director of Worship Ministry. The candidate will be responsible for planning and implementing all worship services; oversight of the recruitment, scheduling, training and discipleship volunteers; the maintenance of the sound, slide and video equipment; and other tasks necessary for the effective implementation of God glorifying worship. Inquires and questions, or letters or application and resumes, can be directed to: office@firstchristianreformed.org.

DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH MINISTRY: The First Christian Reformed Church, Sioux Falls, SD, is seeking a full-time Director of Outreach Ministry. The candidate will be responsible for the oversight and development as well as the discipleship of volunteers for frontline ministry, evangelism initiatives, community relationships, multi-ethnic ministry, transportation ministry, shared pastoral ministry, occasional preaching, and any other tasks necessary for the effective implementation of God glorifying outreach ministry. Inquires and questions, or letters or application and resumes, can be directed to: office@firstchristianreformed.org.

PASTOR Hillcrest CRC in Hudsonville Michigan is seeking a full-time pastor to lead our 450+ members in worship and pastoral care. We seek a pastor with a sincere personal commitment to Christ and a dedication to advance the kingdom of God. The pastor will be devoted to the preaching of the Word, engaged in visioning and setting direction, and build teamwork and trust with staff and lay leaders. Believers will be equipped as lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ, maturing and touching more lives with the love of Christ. A job description and church profile are posted on www.hillcrestcrc.org/search-pastor. If inter-

ested, contact chadschreur@gmail.com. 616-405-7038

PASTORAL OPPORTUNITY open at Faith Community Fellowship CRC of Mount Vernon, Washington in the beautiful Pacific Northwest! We are searching and praying for our next Senior Pastor. We invite you to access our Church Profile for details of who we are and what our mission is. Contact Gordon at 360-630-0257 or e-mail to gord.terpstra@gmail.com. We await your contact!

PASTOR Zuni CRC is seeking a pastor to lead us in worship, encourage us in our growth, and to be a part of our cross-cultural community. Contact: zcms@zunichristianmission.org

WORSHIP DIRECTOR Worship Director: Bethel Community Christian Reformed Church, Newmarket is searching for a permanent part-time Worship Director to coordinate and lead the worship at its two Sunday services. One is more traditional, focusing on hymns and contemporary worship music geared to an older established demographic while the other is focused on contemporary and emerging worship music geared to an unchurched younger demographic. Contact Derek Tensen 905-642-3811 datensen@hotmail.com

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES, Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church, Abbotsford, B. C. Do you have a passion for developing youth and youth leaders to grow in faith, ministry and missions? Provide training, discipleship and curriculum to lead the volunteer team that strives to impact youth. Find all the details for this full time position and Gateway's Church profile under Employment Opportunities at www.gatewaycrc.org. Contact ydgateway@gmail.com with your resume or questions.

THRIVE MINISTRIES is seeking an Associate Pastor who is a spirit equipped servant leader, committed to the Reformed Faith, who will serve primarily as Pastor of our First CRC campus in Fulton, IL. For more information, please email Bruce Bielema at bjbielema@gmail.com or call 563-321-1147

YOUTH DIRECTOR: Prairie Edge CRC in Portage, MI is looking for a Youth Director to lead our Middle School and High School ministries. Please visit <https://pecrc.org/careers> for the job description. Interested candidates must submit resumes via email to pecoffice@charter.net by April 17th, 2019.

IMMANUEL CRC in Hudsonville, Michigan is discerning who God is calling to be our next pastor. We are a loving, praying, caring and serving congregation who desires to advance Christ's kingdom in hearts, in neighborhoods and into the next generation. Thank you for prayerfully considering joining our church family. For more information or to apply please visit immanuelcrc.com or email Mary Jane at immanuelcsrcsearchteam@gmail.com



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Aug 31 - Sep 12 | *Mindy Alexander*

TOUR OF THE BALKANS
Sep 10 - 25 | *John Witte*

ANCIENT EMPIRES MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE
Sep 11 - 24 | *Henk & Thressa Witte*

GREECE & ITALY: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL
Sep 19 - Oct 1 | *Pr. Bill & Lyn Vanden Bosch*

SOUTHWEST MISSIONS
Oct 4 - 16 | *Gary Nederveld*

PARIS GRAND OPERA TOUR
Oct 5 - 11 | *Craig Fields*

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LEAD PASTOR - The Aylmer Christian Reformed Church of Aylmer, Ontario is seeking a full-time Lead Pastor following the retirement of our Pastor in February 2019. We are looking for a self-motivated, compassionate Pastor that is devoted to providing Reformed preaching, nurture our spiritual growth and equip us for community outreach. If this is you, we'd love to speak with you. Please contact Lisa at 519-520-1220 or email bruceandlisavk@hotmail.com. Job description and church profile are available upon request.

TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH of Pella, Iowa invites applications for its part-time Minister of Pastoral Care position. For more information please visit: www.trinitypella.org/employment.

Teachers Wanted

SCIENCE TEACHER Illiana Christian High School is seeking a full-time science teacher to join us at our new campus in Dyer, IN. Qualified applicants would be of Reformed background; strength in Physical Science preferred. Send resume to peter.boonstra@illianachristian.org.

Volunteers

MS CHRISTIAN FAMILY SERVICES MCFS is a nonprofit organization serving people with disabilities. Always seeking volunteers to run a thrift store, conduct maintenance on build-

ings, etc. Please call or email mcfs117@yahoo.com. To learn more, view our website: www.mschristianfamily.org 662-873-4842

SHORT TERM MISSION 2019-2020 opportunities. Honduras: youth camp & construction. Dominican republic: eye clinic, program for children/elderly, construction. Flexible dates. For more information, please contact mark at mvanzeelt2004@yahoo.com or 630-792-1754

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Easter Breakfast

Peter jumps into the water, grabs the net, and brings it and the boat safely to shore.

IT IS DAWN. A lone figure is bending over a charcoal fire on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. He looks up, scanning the horizon. When he catches sight of a boat heading for shore, he recognizes it as his disciples' boat. He cups his hands around his mouth, calling out, "Caught any fish?" Discouraged voices bounce back over the water: "No." He calls again, "Cast the net on the right-hand side." They mutter to themselves, "That's what we've been doing all night," but they do cast it on the right. Before they know it, the net is so heavy with fish they have to wrestle with it to keep it from breaking. As they approach shore, John, a disciple-fisherman, says to Peter, another disciple-fisherman, "It is the Lord."

"Bring me a few fish," calls the voice. Peter jumps into the water, grabs the net, and brings it and the boat safely to shore. While he counts the fish, the other men clean some to bring to the man at the fire who is waiting to grill them a fresh-caught breakfast. When the fish are ready and the bread is toasted, he summons them to come and eat. Each disciple picks up bread and a fish. He prepares a breakfast sandwich for himself and sits down with them on the ground.

Now they know he is not a ghostly apparition—he eats human food. They are eating together again, just like the night they ate the Passover supper with him before he died. They all know that this man is the Jesus whom they loved and were still mourning. The mysterious presence of their risen Lord strikes them dumb. They can't find words to express their throbbing joy (John 21:1-14).

When I see the Lord in his resurrection body eating bread and fish, I know he is alive in the flesh. He is the man



whose hands bled from hammered nails, whose head dripped blood from piercing thorns, whose side had a wound so deep a disciple shoved in a hand, whose rising shook the earth. I marvel that he cared so much for the human needs of his earthly friends that he himself made their breakfast—and ate it with them. This post-Easter appearance moves my spirit to a deeper perception of his resurrection: He is still the God-Man.

I recall that the poet Ezra Pound felt the same way:

*I ha' seen him eat o' the honey-comb
Sin' they nailed him to the tree.
("Ballad of the Goodly Fere")*

B



Charlotte F. Otten is a retired professor of English at Calvin College. She attends Calvin CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

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